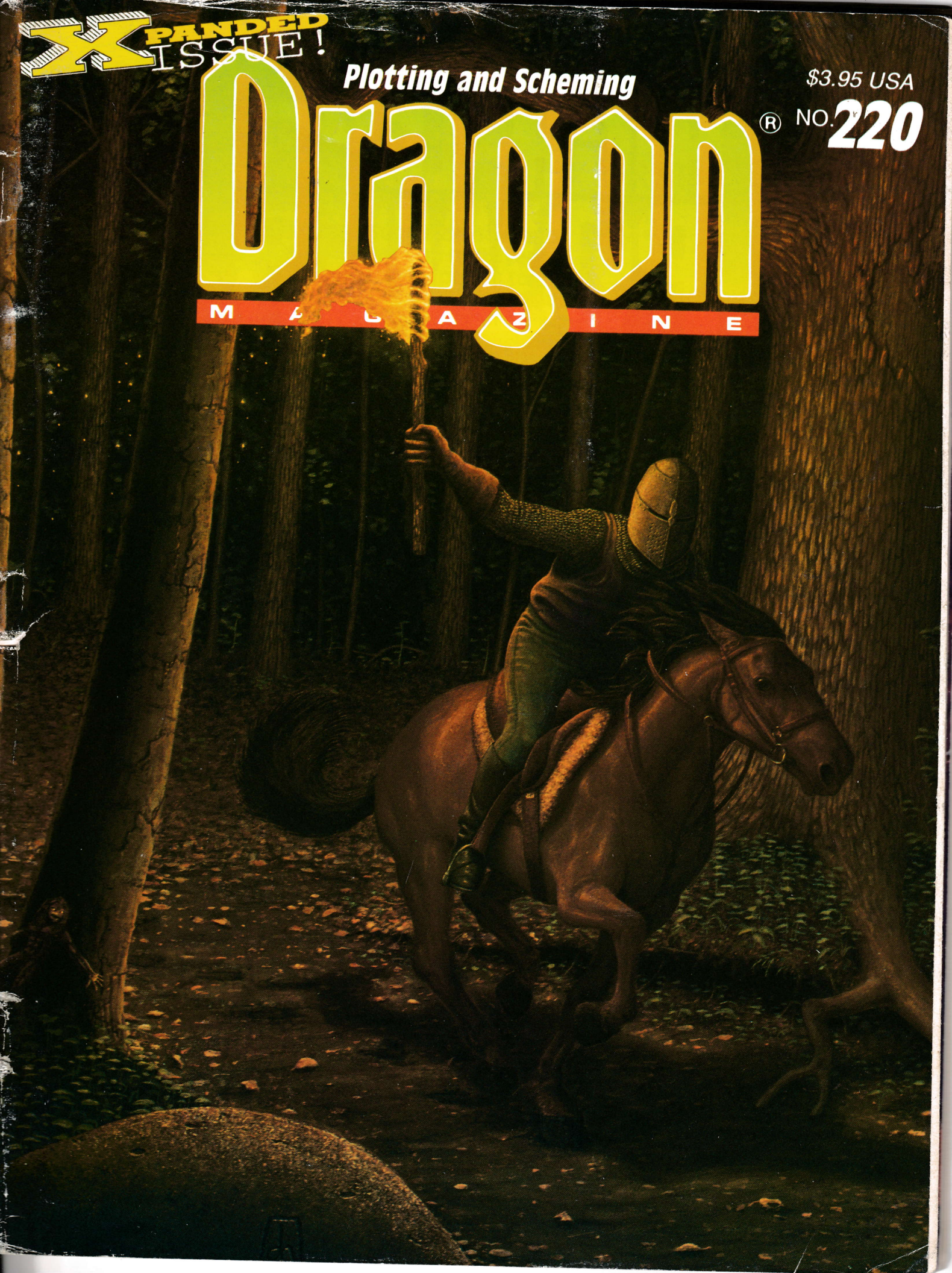
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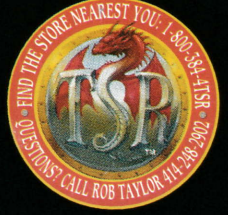

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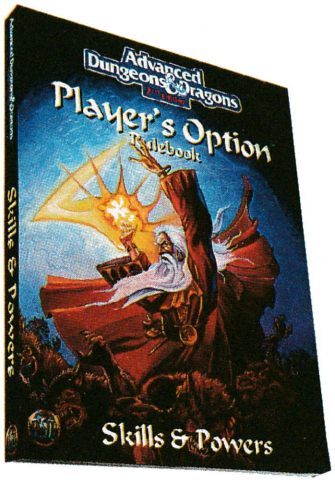

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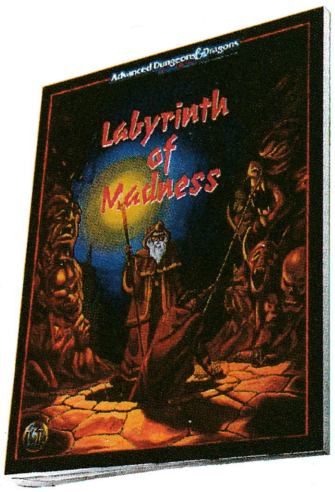

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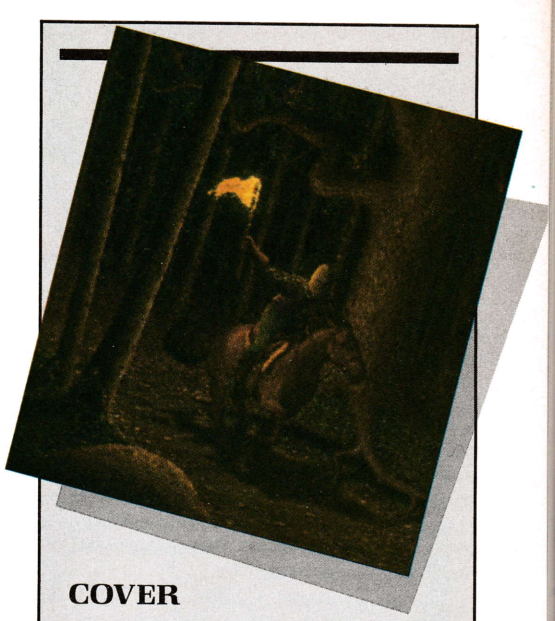

COVER

A rider gallops through the woods by night: is he a messenger or an assassin? Will the wood spirits lurking in the trees catch him? David Horne's "Only the Light Keeps Them Back" sets the tone of danger and intrigue for this issue.

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The GEN CON® Game Fair has traditionally been the time when the Periodicals Department talks to readers face-to-face, in seminars, in Q&A sessions, and at the TSR castle in the dealer area. It is also the time when we offer the lowest subscription price of the year—and this year is no exception. In fact, the special Game Fair subscriptions this year are the cheapest since 1992: $27 for one year of DRAGON® Magazine, $15 for a year of DUNGEON® Adventures, and $40 for a year of both combined—with even bigger savings for multi-year subscriptions (up to 52% off the cover price). But they're only available at the TSR castle during the GEN CON Game Fair, so come say hello to the periodicals staff, and get a great deal on a subscription at the same time!

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Letters

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. If you wish your letter to be published, you must sign it. We will not publish anonymous letters. We will withhold your name if you request it.

The Thing Called slade

Dear Dragon,

Who, or what, is "slade"?

Robert Vaessen
Pensacola, FL

We've often wondered ourselves. In fact, the man we call slade is a not just a designer for TSR's game department; he's also a part-time DJ and a firearms enthusiast, plus he's wanted for highway crimes and misdemeanors in the state of Colorado. He lives with a she-wolf named sheeba. (Not a girlfriend, mind you. A wolf.) He's pretty normal for a designer, really.

Drinking & Gaming

Dear Dragon,

I am writing to give voice to a concern that's been bubbling inside me for a while now: the prominent role that alcohol seems to play in the adventures and the art of the AD&D® game. A letter in the "Forum" in issue #218 suggested modelling the buildings of the PCs' home town on pubs and other buildings that the players themselves are familiar with. The cover of POLYHEDRON® Newzine #100 showed a room full of creatures, each with a tankard or glass in its hand. The adventure that begins in a bar is so common it's a cliche.

I adventured with a group of high school students a few months ago and was a little surprised to hear them talk about their characters getting plastered at the end of their last adventure. Granted, I probably talked that way too, when I was in high school, but with the benefit of hindsight I wonder if that's a good thing

I wonder, too, what is behind this phenomenon. Let's play stereotypes for a minute here—are we over-21 gamers really the kind of people who spend our Friday nights out at the bars? No, we're too busy gaming! So why is that what our characters do? Why do we project the image that drinking and getting drunk is cool? Why does the game itself seem to pass on that myth to younger gamers?

If TSR is going to aim its products at people who have nine years to go before the legal drinking age, it seems to me that TSR and all gamers over 21 have a responsibility to try to teach appropriate behavior connected with the social problem of alcohol abuse.

As a step in that direction in my own campaign, I've given some thought to the archetypical bar that serves as a meeting place in so many AD&D® game worlds. Maybe the tavern was the center of town life in medieval Europe, and certainly eating (and drinking) establishments are the center of modern American social life. But it has not always been so. In ancient Rome, it was considered gauche to eat outside of one's home. Places for social gatherings included the arena, the hippodrome, the theater, and the like. And what about libraries, temples, or gaming rooms (for chess or cards, not necessarily gambling)? A little creativity here can go a long way both in terms of modeling values and of spicing up a campaign!

This may seem like a minor issue. But when I consider the influence that AD&D game has had on me over 16 years of my life, it does give me pause. And I am concerned that the influence it has on others might not be entirely positive. Give it some thought.

Rev. James Wyatt
Brilliant, OH

You raise a good point: what role do RPGs have in moral instruction? The issue has been raised before (see issues #39, 43, and 48, if you've got them), but ultimately players and DMs will make their own choices. Here's my take on it:

Fantasy role-playing games, like other forms of entertainment, are meant to be enjoyable rather than instructive. Drinking has been a part of Western culture and entertainment since long before the Middle Ages. Like other entertainments, RPGs reflect our culture. While they can be teaching tools, that's not a game's primary function. And while I agree that all of us should be concerned about alcohol abuse in the real world, games can't be expected to solve the problem.

As a gamer, my goal is escapism, pure and simple. A game that is a platform for conveying a message, however worthwhile, runs the risk of a backlash from players who just want to have fun. I don't want my paladin to worry that he is resorting to solving his problems with violence when he slays the fiends of the Nine Pits. I don't want to argue with my DM about whether goods taken from tombs are better left there or better given to charity. And as a medieval king, the oppression of the peasantry is a matter for Monty Python quotes rather than political dialogue. Games aren't an ideal venue for discussing codes of behavior, social ills, and social justice.

We want to be heroes, and for thousands of years, heroes have been bigger and better warriors, lovers, leaders—and drinkers—than mere mortals. We follow in the footsteps of archetypes when we game, not in the conventional paths of modern behavior. Fantasy games let us escape to an imaginary place where our PCs can gorge themselves at the king's feast, drink all night, get the girl, and still ride off to adventure in the morning. Though some mature gamers might enjoy a more realistic style of play, acknowledging every consequence of heroic behavior destroys the fun of high fantasy.

Jean Rabe's recent column "Avoiding Happy Hour With Frodyne the Fearless" (issue# 217) provides one example of how gaming can be a literal alternative to bars. How do other readers feel about it? Write and let us know!

Medieval Perspective

Dear Dragon,

I enjoy DRAGON Magazine very much, and I have been a subscriber since 1986. There is one thing, however, that sometimes bothers me: the outlook of many of the magazine's articles and stories, as well as many TSR products, is very American. The battle between good and evil is too absolute to be realistic. In superhero games, that is to be expected. But in fantasy, I yearn for a more medieval European perspective. Let me explain what I mean with an example. In the 14th century, Joan of Arc was a general of France. She was (in game terms) a paladin. Gilles de Rays was at that time the marshall of France. He was an extremely evil person who enjoyed murdering children. Strangely enough, they liked each other. They both fought on the same side. The war was not between good and evil, but between France and England.

In real life, at least from my European point of view, there is seldom an open conflict between alignments. Most often they are forced to work together for a common cause. Sometimes opposites even feel attracted. This can bring a lot of intrigue and romance into a story. One of the best examples of this moral amibguity can be found in the character of Raistlin in the DRAGONLANCE® *Chronicles* and *Legends*. He choose evil, but he loved and was loved by a few good people.

As an aside, Joan of Arc was not the only female knight. In the Middle Ages, there were actually less prejudices than 50 years ago or even today. A black knight, for instance, was not an evil knight but simply black-skinned. Priests were not allowed to marry, but they were allowed to live with a housekeeper and to have children. Unmarried girls could date whomever they wanted, and social mobility was a lot greater than we are led to believe. Our modern standards aren't the only ones we should see in a fantasy world.

Michiel van Veen
Leiden, the Netherlands

Ω

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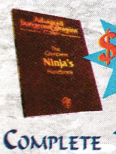

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Editorial

The Gauntlet:
a Counter Intelligence Report

Wolf is worried. The strain of taking over a magazine-in-transition is beginning to show. (Those of you who read his editorial last month probably noticed, he's a little frayed around the edges.) All I did was mention that we should give our readers a "state-of-the-relaunch" message. It is now August, The GenCon® Game Fair is but a short way off, and we remain strangely quiet on the subject. Did we simply forget our promise to our audience? (We haven't.) Or did we change our projected date? (We have.) Wolf felt that we had already devoted too much space on this page to our various transitions. I persisted, and His Editorship caved in. So, to briefly summarize a report we presented to our publishers:

To date we have received several thousand responses to our Counter Intelligence request and survey insert. Approximately a third of the surveys have been tabulated, and *every* letter has been read by at least two people. The responses have ranged from short—sometimes passionate—notes to lengthy analysis running several pages. Most are very well thought out and show a commitment to the magazine by a readership that would be the envy of any editorial staff. While it was never our intention to do a half vast relaunch, it was the quality of your responses that encouraged us to go into even greater depth than we had originally planned. Some of your suggestions are easy to implement and already appear in recent issues. (A couple of cases in point: Many people didn't like the two column opening format for the theme pieces. (It's gone). Some wanted tighter editing on the reviews. ("It's in there!") Other changes are more complex and will take a while longer before they appear in these pages. We're talking with our contributors about editorial directions and concerns, and these changes will appear as they become available. Others still, some new columns and a few radical ideas, will be held and collected for the official relaunch. We're fired up about rolling out the relaunch and owe much of it to you. Thanks!

As would be expected with a creative and diverse audience, there were many differences of opinion in your comments. Still, several strong trends have emerged. I'll briefly list them here, since these are the areas that we are currently concentrating on.

Who's responding?: The clear majority of responses came from longtime gamers and readers. Maybe this is because they've got more perspective to draw upon and feel comfortable with their opinions. If you're new to gaming or DRAGON® Magazine, let's hear from you! Your opinion matters!

Themes, anyone?: A definite *"YES!"* Some folks, however, felt some of the themes are getting old and need refreshing (or should be retired).

TSR games vs. general gaming magazine?: Nearly all responses say to keep DRAGON Magazine as a primarily AD&D® publication. Twenty years ago we were the only major magazine and were obligated to cover this new hobby. That's changed over the years and most of the major game systems and companies today have their own magazines. Our primary (not exclusive, mind you) focus should be fantasy games, our own back yard.

And features?: Features were constantly mentioned as a solid part of the magazine. The most popular features are those that present playable material, like Arcane Lore, Bazaar of the Bizarre, etc. You want more, and you'll get it! Several new concepts were presented, from idea generators to drop-in NPCs and scenarios. These are being considered or are in development.

What were the three biggest gripes?: #3—The use of "recycled art." Many, many people get quite upset when they find product art in their magazine. #2—Too much coverage of card games. "That's not role-playing! This magazine used to be about role-playing!" We hear ya, loud and clear.

And, for the #1 gripe . . . too much advertising and articles that read like advertising. Whew! Fixing this one's gonna hurt, but maybe we need to learn where to draw the line.

The Great Debate: Is DRAGON Magazine for DMs and advanced players, beginners, or all of the above? The debate goes round and round 'til the mind boggles.

How about these thoughts (which were mentioned often enough to warrant serious consideration)?

Political Correctness—The inclusive "he/she" style of editing is about as welcome as fingernails on the blackboard. It was referred to as "obnoxious," "draws too much attention to a non-problem," and "probably not worth the effort." Not one female applauded us for our liberated ways. But, listen up, guys! Women mostly criticized the sexist manner that they were depicted in fantasy art (our art as well as others).

Old Worlds—It was often suggested that we continue to support game worlds for which TSR's Game Department no longer produces game material, i.e. the GREYHAWK® setting, Zakhara, the SPELLJAMMER® universe, *Oriental Adventures*, and so on.

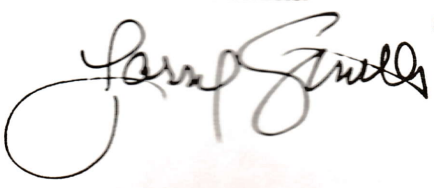
Interactive columns—Several ideas were offered that would give readers a chance to correspond with each other. Many of these could also be translated for America Online (AOL). One reader suggested a column that would be "a mix between 'Letters' and 'Campaign Journal' where reader's characters can write to each other (via Sigil, perhaps)."

Snarfquest and Wormy—Many, many, many people say "Bring back 'Snarf' or Wormy." Such gems usually only come along once. If you were lucky enough to catch them when they ran, consider yourself blessed. Larry Elmore will probably bring us an occasional *Snarfquest* from time to time if we ask him nicely (the latest being in issue #200), but I wouldn't expect either of these to make a regular appearance again (We've lost touch completely with Dave Trampier'). If you missed these the first time out, get your hands on some back issues, and settle in for a little fun reading.

There's more that could be mentioned here, but time and space limitations require that I close. I'll surrender my keyboard to Wolf, who's been seen pacing the halls in desparate need of decompression. See, there's this classic arcade game loaded on this box of binary bits. Wolf spent a complete semester at college mastering the game, and it's the only relief he can find during these trying times.

So, when is the official relaunch? I can't really say for sure. We've only just now begun to get a clear picture of the task before us and put the machinery in motion. I *can* promise that over the next few months you should begin to see evidence of the direction we'll be taking in preparation for the "blessed event." If you like what you see, let us know. If you don't like what you see, let us know that, too. Send your comments to DRAGON Magazine, c/o Counter Intelligence. The one-on-one communication is invaluable.

Ω



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First Quest™

FIRST QUEST is the title of TSR, Inc.'s Audio CD Introduction to Role-playing Game. This series is a feature where veterans of role-playing describe their first experiences in the hobby.

Chits and Bits

by Ed Stark

"Dice? You need to buy dice? We *have* dice! Your old *Monopoly* set has two dice and I think there are four in backgammon.

"*Twenty-sided* dice? 'Twelve-siders'? Do they make dice with that many sides? Why didn't they put them in the box?

"What are all those cardboard squares you've been cutting out, anyway?"

Take a trip back in time, you die-hards, you gamers who've been gaming for longer than you care to remember. There are a lot of people here at TSR who remember the old DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® set with the sheets of numbered squares in lieu of dice, but how many of you out there, in the real world, remember *and have played with* the old D&D® game chits?

That was my introduction to the D&D world.

I heard about the D&D game through a few well-placed comic book ads and from one or two other sources. I did *not* hear about it from my friends, oddly enough—and I never thought to ask around. See, in my neighborhood, I was the one who introduced the games. I was a game-player and a sports-fanatic and a fantasy-reader whose every waking hour seemed consumed with the drive to "find something to do."

I was twelve years old.

I asked my mother if she'd buy me this DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game for my birthday. Being a reasonable parent and an avid game-player herself (we played cards and board games all the time in my family), she was more than willing and, when March 24th rolled around, I received a brand new, blue-box edition of the Basic D&D game. My mother even said she'd play with me if I couldn't find anyone else willing to try.

But I had my friends lined up. Most of my best pals were involved in sports, but I had encouraged a few of them to step off the base paths or out from under the baskets long enough to read some Tolkien or Lewis or McCaffrey—though they usually didn't read *everything* I did. Maybe they'd be interested in playing.

Then I looked at the game.

Where was the board? Where were the dice? How many dice did I need to play? What was I supposed to do? I just didn't understand. It looked fun, but I didn't get the point.

How did you *win?*

A little dejected, I went back to school on Monday, dragging my boxed set along with me. I decided I would spend study hall reading it (I was a conscientious lad) and maybe things would make more sense in scholarly surroundings. I didn't have a lot of hope, but I wasn't ready to give up yet.

The day dragged on. I kept my box in my bookbag, since games aren't allowed in school but, when study hall came, I pulled out the rulebook and started reading. Hey, it *was* a book, and I figured no one would recognize it as a game.

I was wrong.

"Hey, do you play D&D too?"

I looked up. The kid standing next to my desk was tall (for a twelve-year old) and gawky (again, even for a twelve-year old) and I knew him as "Mike." Mike was one of my "other" friends. Most of the guys I hung around with after school were jocks, but, in school, I stuck with the "smart" crowd, because I was in all their classes and we talked about books. This didn't become a problem 'til years later, but that's another story. Mike was on the periphery of the jock group, but firmly inside the smart one.

I shrugged. I didn't want to admit that I couldn't figure out a *game,* not to another guy. "I just got it" seemed a noncommital answer.

He nodded, knowingly. "I've been playing for a while. We've got a campaign going over at Kevin's. You should come over sometime."

I nodded. *Yeah, right,* I thought. Kevin was a sophomore, I was in seventh grade. I knew *of* him—he was pretty weird, but he hung around with some of the cooler guys. Everyone was older than me. I looked back at my book.

But Mike didn't go away. Instead, he sat down, and I got the strange, uncomfortable impression he was studying me. I ignored him as best I could, but it became pretty obvious and even more uncomfortable after a few more minutes. I looked up again, the annoyance obvious on my face.

Mike raised his eyebrows inquiringly. "Mind if I take a look?" He held out his hand for the book.

I passed it over to him, relieved. *He was studying the* book, *not me.* It bothered me that I cared, but the heat was off.

He flipped through it, as though curious, and then frowned. "This isn't right," he muttered, and then made similar comments about different sections. Finally, he passed the book back. "You really should come over and play with us. These aren't the rules we use, though."

I was startled. *Not the rules?* "I thought you said you play D&D," I said. "What other rules are there?"

Mike told me about the CHAINMAIL rules and about a few other things and something called an *ADVANCED* DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game and about how much more fun they were than "this basic stuff." Then he had a bright idea. "Tell you what. This weekend, I'll come over and show you." Before I could respond, the bell rang, and Mike got up and left.

I looked at my basic rule book. I wondered what my mother would say if I told her my new game was obsolete.

That weekend, Mike came over. My mother made sandwiches and lemonade, my dad popped in from time to time "to see how you men are doing," and Mike laughed his head off when he saw my Dixie cups full of four, eight, twelve, and twenty chits each. He pulled out a small bag and emptied the contents on the table. There was a clatter on the table that I would hear for years to come.

"That's okay," he said. "I've got dice." Ω

Ed Stark is a long-time West End Games designer, now a designer for the BIRTHRIGHT™ world at TSR. His sick and twisted mind has kept others amused during many a night on the TSR game circuit.

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Stratagems Dirty Tricks

Trickery for and against PCs

by Gregory W. Detwiler

Artwork by Alan Pollack

Intrigue and just plain dirty tricks are tactics that most players—and many DMs—ignore during an AD&D® campaign. This can be a fatal mistake, as it reduces all adventures to a matter of sheer brute strength, where the PCs often are either fatally overmatched or not challenged at all in the opposition. Very often subtlety is defined only by the dungeon-delvers' maxim, "Run away, run away!" It is useful so far as it goes, but he who fights and runs away will live to run another day only if he has no plans to defeat the enemy. This article will give examples of how to outwit an enemy on both the battlefield and the diplomatic front.

My sources are the culmination of thousands of years of accumulated wisdom. Most come from China: the Orient places greater emphasis on patience, trickery, stealth, and the indirect approach than does western culture. The ancient general Sun Tzu's *Art of War* is a classic, even in the western world of modern times. Another is *The Book of Stratagems,* a collection of 36 maxims applicable equally to warfare and normal life. The first 18 appeared in the west in 1991, thanks to Swiss author Haro Von Senger and translator Myron B. Gubitz (Viking Penguin). As of this writing, I have no idea if the other 18 have appeared yet. My oriental collection is rounded out with accounts of Mongol trickery gleamed from various works concerning Ghenghis Khan and his successors.

In the West, of course, the premier political "how-to" manual is *The Prince*, by Florentine diplomat Niccolo Machiavelli. He wrote in Renaissance Italy, when the peninsula was split up into numerous city states like those of ancient Greece. Intrigue and poisoning (this was the Borgias' time of glory) were common, and Machiavelli himself was in exile when he wrote his book. In fact, he called it *The Prince* because he hoped to use it to butter up a real prince and be taken back into the diplomatic game. Even if you've never heard of Machiavelli before, this fact alone should tell you something about how cynical (if realistic) his book is. Still, if the PCs are too powerful for their own good, Machiavelli and Sun Tzu can be a DM's best friends.

The advice herein is best used in a campaign setting with many different power groups. *The Art of War* and *The Book of Stratagems* were both written during the Time of Warring States in China, when that land was split up into many small kingdoms, as with Renaissance Italy. In this atmosphere of shifting alliances, the entire strategic situation could be altered not merely by a single battle, but by the death or overthrow of a single ruler. If your group of power gamers is in such a campaign setting—and even if they're not—you can use the accumulated lore in these books to make life extremely miserable for them and their characters.

Military Matters

Sun Tzu states that it is better to take an enemy state intact than to ruin it, and that it is likewise better to capture the enemy's army than wipe it out. After all, the losers and their land will be the victor's new subjects and property; a smoking wasteland offers little opportunity for looting and/or taxation. To this ancient general, to subdue the enemy without fighting is the peak of military skill, even better that winning a hundred battles. As can be imagined, he places greater preference of trickery and diplomacy than on sheer military might.

Continuing with Sun Tzu, we learn that the first priority in war is to disrupt the enemy's strategy: burn the bridges on his planned line of march, etc. Next in importance is to use diplomacy to disrupt his alliances (if any). Attacking the enemy's army is only the third best strategy, and worst of all is attacking his cities. Not only does this risk destroying property and loot, but in Sun Tzu's time, it could take half a year to make all the preparations necessary to storm a fortified city, increasing the expense of the war (Sun Tzu favors quick victories). In real life, the commanding general would often lose patience and attack with a simple ladders-on-the-walls assault, losing up to a third of his army without taking the objective.

For practical applications, consider the case when your player characters are military commanders. If they ignore Sun Tzu's first two maxims, they may find not only the enemy army in a superior defensive position but also an alliance of neighboring kingdoms or tribes may gang up on them as well. If their one chance of victory is to destroy the original foe then turn on the alliance, time is not on the PCs' side. They will be tempted to risk high casualties by attacking before they've finished their preparations. This will not endear them to what's left of their troops, particularly if there is little or no plunder if they win despite the odds. The same goes for cities, if most of the loot is destroyed by accident during the assault or deliberately destroyed by the losers.

The *mere fact that the PCs are attacking* gives their foe the advantage of being the defender. Stratagem #4 from *The Book of Stratagems*, "Await the Exhausted Enemy at Your Ease," points this out. The PCs' army may have to march a long way just to reach the foe, stretching supply lines and possibly suffering partisan or guerrilla attacks. (Note: The difference between partisans and guerrillas is that partisans are irregulars who fight in support of the regular army, as did the Russian partisans in World War II, while guerrillas fight without military support, a la the French Resistance.) Supplies may be so low when they arrive that they have to attack the enemy immediately, just to secure stocks of food and water. Sun Tzu frowns on this, not least because the enemy may "abandon" such stocks, which turn out to be poisoned.

The Book of Stratagems provides the example of the Chinese kingdom of Qi, which invaded its neighbor Wei, then retreated when the arrogant Wei general counterattacked. The Qi general let all 100,000 of this soldiers have campfires the first night of the retreat, but the next night, two soldiers had to share the same campfire, reducing the number of fires the Wei scouts could see to 50,000. The night after that, only 30,000 fires could be seen, though the Qi army remained the same size as always. The Wei general, of course, thought that most of the Qi force had deserted and pressed ahead of the main army with his fastest units to be in at the kill. Needless to say, the kill was of his own army, which was ambushed after exhausting itself by covering two days' worth of ground in a single day's forced march. The Wei general killed himself in disgrace. Theoretically, AD&D characters can avoid this sort of trap through divination magic, if they remember to use it.

While thoughts of supplies are still fresh in your minds, Stratagem #7 is "Create Something from Nothing": the use of rumors, dummy troops, and similar deceptions to fool the enemy. I'll come back to it in the political chapter, but for now, we'll just look at the siege of Yongqiu. That city was closely besieged and running short of arrows, so the defenders came up with a cunning plan. Creating a bogus force of straw dummies, they lowered them over the walls at night as if they were a group of real soldiers launching a sortie. The vigilant besiegers promptly pincushioned them with arrows, which were "recycled" when the dummies were hauled back up. Imagine richly dressing the dummies to simulate noblemen in the AD&D game: PCs may waste magic arrows in the attempt to bring them down.

This was actually two tricks in one. The defenders of Yongqiu lowered the dummies every night, harvesting arrows until the besiegers finally caught on. When no more archery barrages greeted the dummies, a force of *real* soldiers came down the ropes and plowed into the surprised archers, thus causing so much confusion that the rest of the garrison was able to sortie and destroy the enemy.

The stratagems include all sorts of good tricks, such as diversionary attacks (Stratagem #6: "Clamor in the East, Attack in the West"), taking advantage of the enemy when there is chaos in his own ranks or country (Stratagem #5: "Loot a Burning House"), and the similar tactic of seizing any opportunity that comes along (Stratagem #12: "Seize the Opportunity to Lead the Sheep Away"). For another case of alliance warfare, however, we should try Stratagem #2: "Besiege Wei To Rescue Zhao." This is a prime example of why you should always try to disrupt the enemy's alliances.

The Chinese kingdom of Zhao was invaded by the much more powerful state of Wei, and Zhao promptly asked its ally Qi to come to the rescue. Qi did so, not by marching directly to aid Zhao's besieged capitol, but by invading Wei to attack *its* capitol. The Wei general was thus forced to break off the siege and force-march back home, where his exhausted troops were—you guessed it—ambushed and destroyed by the army of Qi, which was leisurely awaiting their arrival in a secure position. Single-minded commanders who don't pay attention to their kingdom's other borders may have to withdraw from a successful campaign at the most inconvenient times, often to find their supply bases overrun by a new enemy.

Stratagem #16, "To Catch Something, First Let It Go," is particularly poignant for China because it was used against her own armies so many times by the Mongols. Shrewd battlefield psychologists, the Mongols realized that trapping soldiers in a position from which there was no escape caused them to fight to the death with the strength of despair. Thus, the Mongols always took care to press the enemy army hard on all sides but one, seemingly leaving an avenue of escape open. With this apparent "way out," the enemy troops would break ranks and flee in panic, only to be run down by the more mobile Mongols and easily butchered. A descendant of Davy Crockett once said that "If there was a back door at the Alamo, Davy would have found it." If Ghenghis Khan had been running the siege instead of Santa Ana, there *would* have been a "back door."

Mongol tricks and stratagems could form a chapter in themselves. For instance, they knew that refugees from disaster liked to congregate in familiar surroundings. Thus, to make sure that they had exterminated all human life in an invaded area, they would send troops of horsemen back into areas they had overrun a week ago in surprise sweeps, butchering all those whom they missed the first time they came through. Add to that their unpleasant habit of driving captives before them as cover when assaulting fortifications (which would give good PCs, at least, an acute moral dilemma), and it is easy to understand why they were feared throughout Asia.

Icy rivers and Mongols made a lethal combination. During the winter, they would often let cattle from their commissariat stray near a frozen river. If the starving peasants (*all* peasants are usually starving, particularly in winter) on the

other side crossed and herded the cows back, the Mongols knew the ice was thick enough for the army to cross in safety. On one occasion in Russia, they even took up positions *on* the frozen river itself to await the Russian attack. The Russian knights charged, and their horses skidded on the ice and piled up. Needless to say, the Russians lost, and it was not until after their defeat that they realized the Mongols had dusted the ice on their side of the river with soil and ashes to provide decent footing.

Fittingly for our last example, we combine military and political matters. Stratagem #9 is "Observe the Fire on the Opposite Shore," which means sitting tight while the enemy undergoes a crisis, waiting until he is weakened enough for you destroy. A prime example is a war between your enemy and a neighbor: this version is called "Sit on the Mountain and Watch the Tigers Fight." Agents provocateur who can actually stir up a war between two powers are greatly prized, while you become what the Chinese called "the laughing third party," or "the laughing third." In western history, the prime example is that of the warriors of Islam, who made their initial burst of conquests in the Middle East after the Persian and Byzantine Empires had exhausted each other in a long-lasting war.

Politics and Intrigue

For this field, we will concentrate on *The Book of Stratagems* and *The Prince* as reference works. Role-players will be particularly interested in this chapter.

Let's start with flattery. Buttering up an intended victim, then killing him when he's caught off guard, is a time-honored component of plotting all over the world. The stratagem for this is #10, known variously as "Hide Your Dagger Behind a Smile" or "Honey in the Mouth, Sword in the Belt." Machiavelli tells you how to guard against this, but in a rather grim manner. You see, he believes that a secure ruler should be feared, though not hated or despised. The only way to guard yourself against flattery is to let men know that they will not offend you by speaking the truth. Unfortunately, when everyone feels he can tell you the truth, you lose respect. In other words, you can't win.

Yes, that's right: Machiavelli said a ruler should be feared, but not hated. In his view, this means he must be a just ruler, but so strict in punishing wrongdoers that he doesn't mind being charged with cruelty for the sake of keeping his subjects united and faithful. Punishment, after all, involves only individuals, whereas their crimes affect the entire community. Go for fear first, without provoking hatred as well through unjust rule, and hope for the best. For as Machiavelli commented, men love people of their own free will, but fear at the will of the prince.

By now, all you players of good-aligned characters must be gritting your teeth. Well, keep on gritting, because the worst is yet to come. PC commanders are often given command of invasion forces to annex a new piece of territory, which is then often granted to the conquering commander as a reward. According to Machiavelli, the very first thing you should do when taking over is *immediately* to kill everyone who might make trouble in the future, particularly those connected with the old power structure. Eventually, the survivors will forget about it, because all the bloody work was done at the very start of your reign. If you commit all your cruelties at once, says Machiavelli, then you won't have to repeat them every day and provide a continuous source of friction. PCs and DMs alike who wonder how some evil kingdoms can be stable may find the explanation here.

Regarding everyone else in your new conquest, Machiavelli says that if the area was formerly a free state, the only way securely to rule it is to "despoil" (i.e., destroy) it. If you don't, you will always have to live with the threat of rebellion. You might be able to stave off the inevitable for a while if you allow the people to live under their old laws, with loyalty and the payment of taxes to you as the only conformity required. The ancient Persians did this, but found out when fighting Alexander the Great that this did not produce overly enthusiastic levies in battle. When the Persian satraps were kicked out or slain, the common people rolled over and played dead for Alexander. Note that this is not the case for kingdoms that were ruthless despotisms; in that case, the people merely exchange one tyrant for another, with no real incentive to rebel. Paladins should not be assigned to rule conquered populations!

As far back as the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide* in the original edition of the AD&D game, we find mention of the fact that serfs and peasants are generally kept unarmed, so that it takes rebels longer to muster an army. However, it *does* happen eventually, perhaps with outside support. Machiavelli frowns on disarming a newly-conquered populace, and additionally states that if you conquer an unarmed people, you should arm them at the first opportunity. Not only does this increase the number of soldiers at your disposal, but it lets your newfound subjects know that 1) you are so secure in your power that you do not fear them, and 2) you trust them, both as subjects and as people capable of defending themselves. If you fail to arm them, or disarm them, then you as look weak and cowardly, to say nothing of tacitly admitting that you don't trust them. This creates resentment which can start a rebellion in the first place, and you can bet that any hostile neighbors will eagerly take advantage of the split in your kingdom to support the rebels with training and arms. Essentially, it all comes back to the point that if you're fair when ruling, you don't have to fear a rebellion; if not, then the people will revolt, arms or no.

Part of the business of overthrowing a ruler consists of the elimination of his advisors. You can assassinate them outright, but it is best if you can cause a falling-out between them and the ruler, so that he does the job himself and incurs fear and distrust among the survivors. This fits in with Stratagem #3, "Kill with a Borrowed Knife." Rumors and slander can cause a ruler to act unwisely against an advisor, and it is here that we return to the previously mentioned stratagem "Create Something from Nothing." It is also called "Three Men Make a Tiger," from a case in the book. An emperor was asked by an advisor (whom he later slew due to slander-induced distrust) if he would believe it if one or two men swore that a tiger had entered his fortified city from the forest outside. The emperor said "No," but then commented that if *three* men swore there was a tiger loose in the city, then it must be true. Oh, no, it doesn't!

Modern readers can see in this a repeat of Hitler's maxim "A big, bold lie, repeated often enough, will fool most people." A shrewd propaganda campaign, which admittedly is more likely in a modern or futuristic SF game setting than a fantasy one, can turn people against even the most heroic characters in a surprisingly short time. Crime lords created by GMs should invest in media outlets like newspaper chains or TV stations, slandering superheros as vigilantes at every opportunity. Why do you think one of the superhero games was called *Villains and Vigilantes?*

If the PC in any game system wants to fight corruption, he should publicly (and harshly) punish the first crooks he catches, then keep a close eye on all other suspects to see how they react. This follows Stratagem #13, "Beat the Grass to Startle the Snake." A corrupt Chinese prefect received an official complaint from the people in his district against his secretary, who was guilty of precisely the same crimes he was. This shook him up so much that he commented in his diary that the petitioners had only beaten the grass, but he was already a frightened snake.

Let's drop down to personal relations now. In virtually any game system, one of the biggest problems the referee has is dealing with players whose characters have too much power. With an entire party of supercharacters, this problem is compounded, but it also bears within it the seeds of its own solution. We return once more to the stratagem "Kill with a Borrowed Knife."

The kingdom of Qi had three powerful knights, Gongsun Jie, Tian Kaijiang, and Gu Yezi, who were so arrogant and secure

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in their power that they were grossly disrespectful of their kingdom's Chief Minister, one Duke Yanzi. When he complained of their behavior to the king, that worthy sadly replied that the knights were too powerful for him to punish (sound like any PCs you know?). Taking matters into his own hands, Tanzi plucked the two best peaches from the finest tree in the king's garden and sent them to the three knights via messenger, with the news that the two peaches must go to the two most valiant knights.

Gongsun Jie immediately spoke up, claiming to have killed a wild boar with his bare hands, as well as capturing a tiger in the same manner. Needless to say, he grabbed a peach as soon as he was done talking. Tian Kaijiang routed two entire armies with just his (nonmagical) sword and no companions, finishing his story by snatching up the other peach. Then Gu Yezi spoke.

When the third knight was fording the Yellow River on horseback, a giant turtle grabbed his steed and made off with it, dismounting him at the same time. Not willing to give up his horse, Gu Yezi sank to the river bottom, first running a hundred steps upstream and then, after having gotten his bearings, ran nine miles downstream (yes, *ran*, even though he was underwater and probably wearing armor), finally killing the turtle and rescuing his horse. When the locals saw him emerge from the depths of the river with the trophy head of the turtle in one hand and his horse's tail in the other, they promptly mistook him for a river god. By now, of course, the peaches were gone, so he drew his sword and demanded one.

The other two knights were so ashamed of their greed that they handed over both their peaches to Gu Yezi, then committed suicide. Immediately afterwards, Gu Yezi himself felt guilt, both for having brought about the deaths of his comrades and for bragging about himself. Naturally, he committed suicide as well, and it is a measure of his arrogance that with his last words, he lamented the greed of his fellows, commenting that if they had given him one peach and split the other in two to share between them, then everyone would have gotten what he had coming to him. Thus ends the story known in China as "Two Peaches Kill Three Knights."

In real (gaming) life, of course, your players won't actually have their characters commit suicide. What's more likely to happen is that they'll fight among themselves and kill each other for the prize. But then, this sort of thing would only happen when we have high-level characters with equally large egos. I mean, how many players with powerful characters actually get arrogant and cocky?

Seriously, you can use the "limited prize" option to promote strife in the party in any game system. Perhaps some alien or futuristic military outfits determine their top commanders via combat, like the Clans in *MechWarrior*, the RPG version of the BATTLETECH game. It wasn't much more than a year ago, as I write these words, when the entire "Forum" section of one issue of DRAGON Magazine was taken up by a discussion as to how to counter a PC in the STAR WARS game whose possession of a suit of powered armor made him all but invincible. The solution, of course, is to let another PC or NPC get his hands on a suit of equal power, then let them fight it out either as regular enemies, or as part of a rivalry for some prize like a commission in the Rebel ranks. You don't even have to kill the too-powerful PC in this instance, just wreck his nifty suit beyond repair, and do the same to that of his rival to keep the nightmare from starting all over again. Think of the neat little moral lessons you can provide to your players concerning greed and the lust for power.

Playing powerful characters off against each other is an excellent means of evening the odds by destroying magic items and other too-powerful gear, to say nothing of the possibility of killing off armies of supporters. And if all else fails, send them to Kara-Tur or whatever your world's version of China is, and have them meet a particular trio of knights on less than friendly terms . . .

Any DM who enjoys hitting his players with moral decisions will find plenty of material in this article alone, to say nothing of the reference works in their entirety. If the local equivalent of the Mongols drive their innocent captives before them in an assault, do you shoot at them? or hold your fire and risk defeat? For that matter, if the Mongols pursue retreating troops so closely that keeping the castle gate open for them will let their pursuers in as well (a common Mongol tactic), do you let your troops in anyway? or slam the gates in their faces and watch them die?

Suppose you are a successful military commander who has been granted control of a newly-conquered land. Do you follow Machiavelli's advice and systematically kill off everyone who might pose a threat to your rule? Or do you sit back and wait for the inevitable revolts to come, creating more bloodshed later than would have come in the beginning? Once a campaign becomes largely political, many players would welcome a revolt for the sake of removing boredom, but a real-life ruler who liked bloodily suppressing rebellions for the sake of entertainment would be seen as something of a monster. Does the greater good for all the people you rule have greater precedent over your alignment restrictions? You and your DM will have to decide.

In short, the best way to bring an unbalanced game back into line with what you intended is to hit the players (and their characters) with the tried-and-true methods used in the real world. Slam too-powerful characters with a big dose of reality, and fantasy will never be the same again. Ω

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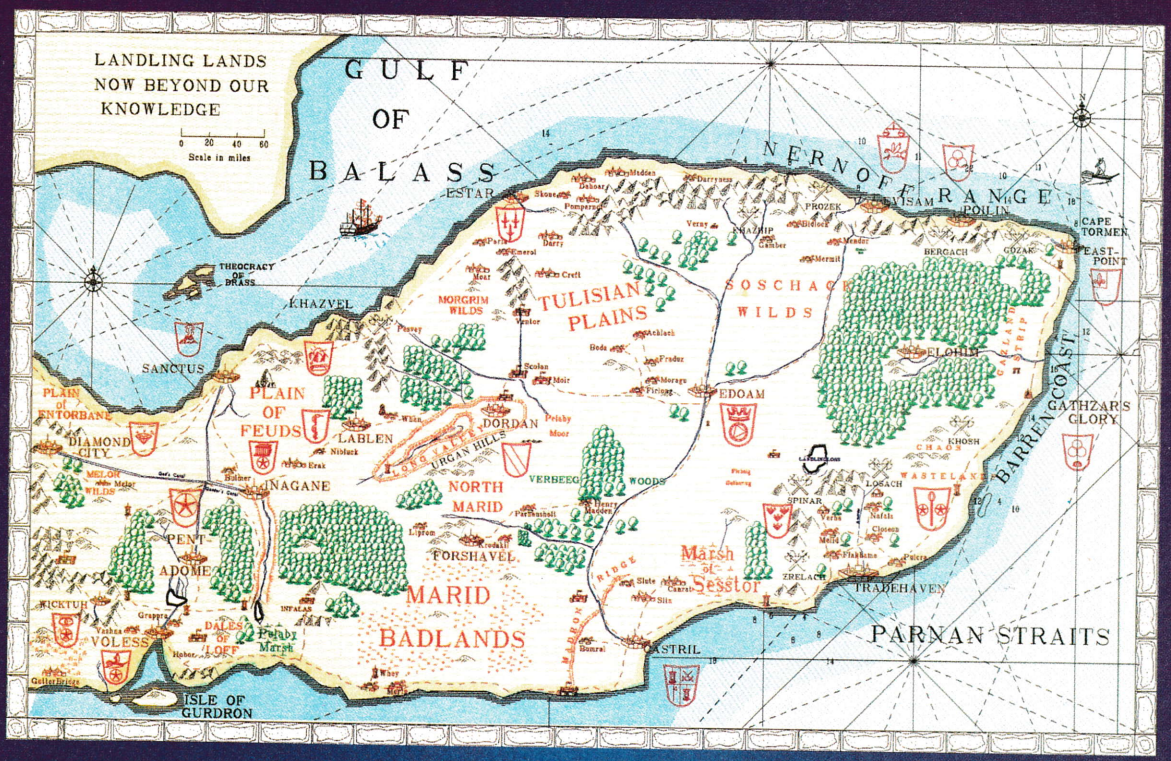

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Politics of Anuire

or, How To Get Ahead in Anuire

by Colin McComb
and Carrie A. Bebris

Artwork by Tony Szczudlo

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."
— William Shakespear, Henry IV, Part 2

There's more to being king than sitting on a throne, making pronouncements, raising taxes, and building roads. There's also the subtle interplay of politics, the dance of diplomacy, and the poisoned word against a rival.

Diplomacy flourishes within the remnants of the Anuirean Empire, creating all sorts of ways to make or break an alliance. A regent who understands the nuances of the political game can make his own rules and steer his own destiny.

Politics is a game of getting a leg up on opponents. But Anuirean regents play for more than mere social standing—they play to make themselves the next Emperors of Anuire, to decide the fate of the Empire. Such deadly serious stakes don't allow the players in this game to treat it lightly. They'll do whatever they can to weed out those who aren't in the game, and they stoop to whatever tricks they need to win. Yes, even the high-minded priests and paladins find it necessary, occasionally, to resort to subtle (or blatant) force.

An Overview of Anuirean Politics

Anuire houses at least four different schools of political thought, each associated with a particular region. Naturally, the sovereigns of a given area don't always think and act as their neighbors do. However, the majority tend to play under the same rules as nearby regents to avoid offending their fellows.

PC regents must learn the prevailing political style of their region and how to play the game better than their neighbors. Those who break from the mold and establish their own patterns run the risk of angering nearby regents with their brash ways. While some regents might respect someone who dares to be different, most of the established powers feel nothing but contempt for those who won't play by the rules.

The Courtiers of the Heartlands

The Heartlands form the center of Anuirean politics. This region is home to the major players in the quest for the Anuirean Empire's Iron Throne, which many see as the first step toward dominating all Cerilia. Courts of the Heartlands attract nobles from throughout Anuire who seek an education in political maneuvering. Here, would-be emperors develop techniques of subtle treachery and discernment.

Through studying their peers, sharp pupils learn how to read a man's heart—to glean emotion from a flicker of the eyes, and to decipher motives by listening to a speaker's voice as well as his words. Courtiers of the Heartlands have mastered language manipulation—particularly allusions and double meanings—to such a high degree that one can issue a public *cut direct* which only the recipient will recognize as an insult. Although these regents always act as gracious hosts, each knows exactly where he stands in the esteem of another. The facades serve only to keep others from knowing.

And others *want* to know. The real entertainers at any court function are not the jesters, minstrels or players, but the guests. Courtiers listen carefully to each other's repartee, anxiously trying to discern which comments hold hidden meanings, and what intrigues they might reveal. An eavesdropper's purest delight comes from overhearing a stray remark which confirms a long-held suspicion.

Most rulers of this region concern themselves primarily with advancing politically and convincing their peers of their superior claim to the Iron Throne. Those who get in the way are stepped on, stepped over, or punished for their boldness. A regent of the Heartlands despises the thought of someone surpassing him in power; when necessary, rulers set aside their grudges and unite to tear down an individual who rises too quickly. Only those with immense power (like Prince Avan or the Mhor) are exempt from this tacit code.

Prime Example: Darien Avan, Prince of Avanil, First Citizen of the Imperial City of Anuire, is an excellent example of how Heartlands regents think and operate. He's a smooth talker with schemes in constant motion, all designed to carry him closer to the Throne. He remembers those who've gotten in his way, and he punishes them when it's politically expedient to do so. He has plans within plans within plans, and his motto seems to be "If you're not a player, you're a pawn." His plots most often turn his enemies against each other, thus saving him the trouble of having to deal with them himself. He plays one off the other, planting false rumors and half-truths (even the whole truth, when it suits him) to promote suspicion and hatred between his enemies. Everyone in the Heartlands strives to imitate the prince, but few of them have the native intelligence and cunning to carry it off as well as he.

How to Take Advantage of This: Emulating Prince Avan is one of the easiest ways to get ahead in the Heartlands. The regent of a lesser realm might find it best to lie low for a while, allowing more powerful entities to think they are manipulating him, while slowly building up a base of power for himself. If he can earn the favor of one of the major players (Avan, the Mhor, Baron Tael of Ghoere, or the High Prelate of the Western Imperial Temple of Haelyn), he'll have a powerful ally to protect him against the depredations of avaricious neighbors. He can start saving his regency points and Gold Bars to combat the most obvious attacks against him. Meanwhile, he can drop suggestions in various ears regarding his enemies, offering the opinion that perhaps they're becoming a little *too* powerful.

To succeed in the Heartlands, it is best to be cautious but prepared. A regent who moves too quickly encourages other regents to see him as a threat; if he moves too slowly, the other regents may roll right over him. The best course is to find the flow of the politics and struggle to keep up with it. A good player must learn to match the current and eventually to control it. In the Heartlands, everyone's so worried about being careful that a PC willing to take a quiet risk or two can advance without attracting attention.

Typical Schemes: A Heartlands regent is an expert in manipulation, using tricks to implicate his enemies. One trick in favor now is buying into other holding types outside one's realm. Someone interested mainly in Alamien law might use a series of aliases to obtain contacts and holdings in Tuornen's temples, thereby pulling in extra money and using the temples to antagonize those he might otherwise fear in Alamie. However, there's quite a good market for information about the true wielder of power in any given domain.

Current Plots: It is well known that the Baron of Ghoere and one of his generals had their disagreements. This general has recently defected, taking several units of Ghoere's army with him. They have sworn allegiance to the Mhor and integrated themselves into Mhoried's army. Is this just a ploy of Ghoere's to infiltrate his men into Mhoried? If so, surely the Mhor would be worried. And surely Ghoere wouldn't try anything so heavy-handed.

One additional piece of information has recently come to light about this development: Prince Avan had been corresponding semi-secretly with the general shortly before the general's defection. Did Avan want this information leaked? Did he engineer the whole plot? Does he have some deeper motive? Or is he just trying to instill fear in the two regents? And if so, why did the Mhor accept the general's fealty?

The Eastern Marches' Masquerade

Diplomacy in the Eastern Marches is a relaxed, informal affair, where every ruler smoothly disguises whatever hatreds may lie in his heart. Easterners consider themselves the most civilized and cultured of all Anureans, and so they mask their beliefs and emotions in a civilized, cultured man-

ner. While Heartlanders will deliver barbs through pointed badinage, an Easterner will never reveal his true feelings toward another regent. These rulers don't usually attempt to project images of power and assurance, preferring instead to keep themselves as inoffensive as possible and leave their enemies wondering.

Eastern regents shun the double-crossing tactics and elaborate intrigues of their Heartlands counterparts. They also reject—though ever so politely—outside interference and "advice" regarding the operations of their realms. They mind their own business and wish others would do the same.

There are some, however, who suspect the Easterners of political manuevering so subtle that others don't even realize it's occuring. Whispers say the rulers of the Eastern Marches merely bide their time, slowly and patiently laying plans that will make the politicians of the Heartlands look boorish and crude. Is the notorious Eastern independence really a front for the most intricate political web of them all?

Prime Example: Lady Eluvie Cariele of Coeranys typifies Eastern-style politics. Though she has allies, she keeps these other regents at arm's length—and out of her business. She knows the expediency of politics and prefers not to suffer from the eagerness of an erstwhile ally. When she entertains nobles from surrounding realms she takes care to slight no one, for to do so would tip her hand and reveal her true feelings. Her comfortable court creates a friendly atmosphere which puts her visitors at their ease and makes it easier to conclude treaties and alliances.

How to Take Advantage of This: Taking advantage of Eastern rulers proves difficult. Their independence makes them slow to trust. The easiest way to get ahead in the East is through hard work and honesty. A newcomer who avoids politics may earn invitations to other regents' courts, then begin laying plans. Success is a matter of waiting patiently for the right moment to enter the game. Trust doesn't come easily to the regents of the Eastern Marches, and rulers can't afford to abuse it.

Typical Schemes: In this region of independent, cautious rulers, there are no "typical" schemes—so far as anyone knows. Yet for this very reason, some suspect the Easterners may be the greatest, most subtle schemers of all. An Eastern regent plotting against another would do well to keep his plans to himself, slowly gaining the trust of the other regent. Eventually the schemer could destroy his target's relationships with other realms by using knowledge gained in trust to undermine everything a competitor has worked for.

Current Plots: If a web of intrigue exists in the Eastern Marches, it's nearly impossible to discover. Perhaps it's better just to report current events and let others construe what they will.

Raenech, the self-proclaimed Duke of Osoerde, has been leery of strangers since an envoy from Coeranys left his domain last week. One can only guess at the words exchanged between the two, but it seems likely that the envoy's news brought on the duke's current behavior. Or perhaps recent peasant unrest stirred up by an unknown agitator has caused his discomfort—Raenech is aware that his subjects consider him a blackguard. Has someone in this region of carefully disguised emotions decided to reveal his feelings toward the usurper?

Diplomatic Realm Actions

Of the many ways to seize power in Anuire, few are so loved as outright war. Nonetheless, several other actions work to a ruler's advantage just as effectively. As long as regents plan intelligently, any action works to their benefit. Regents also can use most of these actions to overthrow an enemy before he realizes he's seriously challenged.

Agitate: Unless a character is agitating his own province to a higher loyalty rating, this action is taken only as hostility from an opponent. It's often used to send a message to the king that other powerful people aren't happy with his performance—unhappy enough that they are willing to resort to threats against the kingdom itself to get their way.

Contest: Regents interpret the "contest" action several ways. A warrior-king can get away with using this action in his own territory with little diplomatic damage, as long as he doesn't do it too often against one particular regent. He can simply explain that he's maintaining the status quo of his own land. Of course, if he's making sweeping changes across the rest of the country, he'll have to find another excuse to present to regents he continues to wrong.

Regents attempting to gain a foothold in another domain must use this action. He can take the sting out of his attempt by promising to support the domain's ruler; a few Gold Bars in a situation like this can go a long way toward appeasing ruffled feathers. Also, signed treaties work wonders, but that's a matter best left to the diplomacy action.

Declare War: This is the least subtle realm actions that a regent can use against his enemy. It's an out-and-out declaration of hostile intention, used to mobilize troops and draw allies for one side or another. Tradition calls it the last resort of diplomacy, the "continuation of politics by other means."

Still, regents use this action to send a message to a recalcitrant enemy, and just because a regent declares war doesn't mean that a war is inevitable. A prospective warrior should note that such a "bluffing" tactic works only when used in great moderation. A regent declaring war left and right in hopes of forcing fellow regents into action is not likely to succeed—except, perhaps, in goading them all to unite and remove him from power.

Decree: Regents often use this action to show a fellow regent an intention, whether good or bad, toward his kingdom. It's not nearly as extreme as a declaration of war and is much less likely to start a war. Someone going to the trouble of spending the GB required to make a public decree usually means what he says; people lose faith in a ruler who vacillates publicly.

Diplomacy: This action is the first and usually best way to conduct correspondence between two regents. It's an initial extension of feelers, testing possible reactions to various initiatives. It's also a good excuse to send diplomats and spies to another kingdom, and a good way to size up the opposition. Some regents reach an easy agreement, while others require tense negotiations and careful bargaining.

A good diplomat soon proves himself invaluable. He backs his opponents into corners and wrings the best bargain from almost any deal between two countries. He has access to all a kingdom's spies and learns a surprising amount about his assigned country before he ever reaches his post. In his own way, a diplomat is even more important to information-gathering than a spy.

One of the best ways to subvert a hostile king is through his favorite diplomat. By carefully wooing an ambassador, a king at once can make a good friend and destroy a potential source of information for his enemy. Of course, most diplomats realize this and encourage such beliefs in their targets. Some are vulnerable; others merely put on the show.

Espionage: Surprisingly, spying is not always a hostile action. Though confirming one's secret actions can insult the ruler of a realm, neighbors have a legitimate interest in the developing policies of that realm. Espionage is as simple as a diplomat passing a few silvers to a chambermaid for listening at a certain door, or as complicated as setting up an entire spy network. Obviously, the more complicated the scheme, the more embarrassing to the instigating regent—it shows a lack of faith in his fellow regent. The greater the number of spies, the greater the lack of faith. Thus, if a king creates a spy network, he'll have make sure the number of spies in the target kingdom cannot easily be determined.

Espionage action may also instigate an assassination. Obviously, that's not something that can be explained away easily. Any regent worth his salt will try to hide the assassin's employer through several different layers—an attempted assassination definitely becomes grounds for a war. Assassination is a simple way of resolving conflicts with a ruler, but it should also be the very last resort, an acknowledgement that the two regents cannot resolve their differences any other way. Even a false attempt signals absolute hatred, even if it was attempted to get the measure of a regent. Assassination makes the vendetta between the two kingdoms personal, and almost nothing can mend the rift except the death or humiliation of one of the regents.

Trade Route: Yes, even a trade route can prove useful to a regent. By building a road to an enemy's capital and establishing a level 0 holding to develop the trade route, a regent increases his power in his enemy's realm, slowly luring his opponent into a false sense of security.

Economics play an important role in any kingdom's foreign policy. Strengthening or weakening trade barriers sends an effective message to a competitor. Economics are an entirely different game than politics, but in the end they both serve the same purpose. Cutting off a competitor's economic base can inflict almost as much damage as an assassination.

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Pioneer Politics

The Northern Marches and the Western Coast are far more rough-and-tumble than the rest of Anuire. Regents here have little time for pretty words, seeing instead the need for fast action and determined wills. However, just because they live in a rough area doesn't mean that someone can take advantage of them easily. The regents of this area can discern quickly the heart of matters; anyone dealing with them would do well to skip flowery words and all but the most careful manipulations—these regents have little time or inclination to hear wordy supplications.

Although they prefer directness in the speech of others, rulers of the North and West often describe their own deeds in euphemisms. A favorite tactic of the Archduke of Boeruine is to move units of his army for "peacekeeping measures," when all know that the peace he wants to keep is his own. Most of the other regents of the are a conduct their business similarly.

These regents do not pretend friendship with those who are not their friends. If regents are dealing with a superior power, they give in ungraciously. These are proud people—getting one of them to bow to another is quite an accomplishment. That's why most of them dislike the Archduke of Boeruine—he's powerful enough to threaten them and get away with it.

Prime Example: Fhiele Dhoesone, Baroness of Dhoesone, is a typical ruler of the Northern Marches. Though she's the daughter of an elf queen, she does not participate in the courtly dance any more than necessary. She finds life on the frontier rough and hard, and she believes that regents should rule, not mince words or worry about niceties. She has enough trouble with her kingdom without having to worry about offending someone with an ill-chosen word. Giants, orogs, goblins, and ever-present guild problems keep her from much of the courtly life, and frankly, she prefers it that way. Though not brash, she'd prefer not to have to mull each word that springs from her mouth. Fhiele believes far more in the spirit of the law than the letter of it.

How to Take Advantage of This: Manipulation of these regents should be attempted with caution. Little irritates them more than knowing that someone's trying to use them as pawns. These regents tend to see through typical Heartlands politics, and view themselves as "above all that." However, well-phrased (and succinct!) requests and appeals for minor aid are usually granted. An open smile and eye contact, combined with straightforward speech, can go a long way in the Northern Marches and Western Coast. Since the regents here do not appreciate the subtleties of manner that can carry a person far in other regions of Anuire, diplomats need to cultivate at least the appearance of direct dealing.

Typical Schemes: The regents here have little use for intricate schemes, preferring to deal with problems head-on rather than bargain through intermediaries. The schemes that do come from this school tend to be fairly crude, at least compared to those of the Heartlands. One of the most popular plots is paying a band of mercenaries or Thurazik goblin raiders to cause trouble for a rival. While the rival's off dealing with the trouble, the schemer can make his move. It's an obvious move, but it's one that's been proven to work. A wise king will never fully commit his troops or himself to one of these disturbances; instead, he'll allot only a portion of his resources while pretending full commitment. When his enemy makes a move, he can simply turn and deal with the trouble. In a variation of this theme, a ruler will hire raiders himself and see who will try to take advantage of the "confusion." Regents like to use this situation to learn who their friends are.

Current Plots: The lawless creatures of the Giantdowns have always caused fear in Dhoesone. Now it seems that someone has stirred up the giants and bandits of the region, encouraging them to rampage through the domain. However no one has found evidence of human involvement. Could the agitator be a Rjurik druid, hoping to drive Anuireans from the northern lands? Or might Cariele be working through unknown agents? Everyone knows that Cariele covets the resources of Dhoesone, and its regent dances to the tune of guildmistress Mheallie Bireon.

Speaking of Cariele, rumors circulate of a tower near Toriendor Cuachlimyr, the sole passage through the Stonecrown Mountains. The tower, once it appears, spells doom for travelers and caravans. Many believe that a wizard works to make life difficult for the northern lands, that perhaps an Alamien mage seeking glory for himself and his domain attempts to weaken the two northern lands.

The Kingdom Builders

The Southern Coast is the oldest region of Anuire holds some of its newest kingdoms. History runs strong in these realms, yet they currently experience a strange time of new leadership. Southern regents generally demonstrate more concern over building their kingdoms than playing the political games that characterize the rest of Anuire. Most of the regents command fairly new kingdoms and concentrate on keeping those kingdoms safe, stable, and solvent.

Rulers of the Southern Coast keep themselves carefully aloof from the dealings of the other schemers. Many consider them the best rulers because they set aside personal ambition for the betterment of their citizens. They are not, however, above seeking retribution for wrongs done to them, and they will do whatever they can to destroy someone who has proven himself untrustworthy.

Prime Example: The Baroness Marlae Roesone exemplifies Southern political philosophy. Her realm, torn from Diemed and ravaged by constant insurrection, has existed for only 70 years. She's concentrating on working with the land and making it prosperous again, rather than making her realm a huge force in Anuire. That might happen in a few years; right now she cares only about securing Roesone's position as a viable kingdom.

How to Take Advantage of This: Anyone playing political games on the Southern Coast had best do it cautiously. Irritated kingdoms will unite against someone hindering their reconstruction, and they'll do their level best to crush someone who's getting too cocky for his tenuous position. When making political moves, regents should first consider the consequences of each step. A well-planned initiative can force other regents' hands. But the mastermind should be secure in his own lands before playing with the lands of others.

Typical Schemes: As most of the kingdoms here are coastal, they play more mercantile games than the rest of Anuire. Southern regents have learned to cast their economic webs wide, and they compete with each other in Khinasi and Brecht realms. They trade politics and favors with the foreign rulers, trying to drive out or weaken their rivals. Guilds play a fair part in the politics of the Southern Coast, and they've proven invaluable time and again—Southern regents play through more intermediaries than other rulers, seeking a subtle edge on their enemies.

Of course, rulers of the Southern Coast don't hold themselves above more traditional routes of diplomacy. However, they're always interested in trying something new, something that will distinguish them from the other regents of Anuire. They want to make it as hard as possible for regents of other political philosophies to drive them out of power.

Current Plots: Merchant ships from Roesone and Mieres don't seem to be finding their destinations. Storms and pirate attacks account for a few of the ships, but the rest seem to disappear without a trace. Ilien's ships, however, arrive without mishap. Are they protected by wizard regent Rogr Aglondier's spells? Or does Aglondier use magic to sink the other ships? Some rumors suggest that the ruler of Ilien has made a deal or two with the Seadrake.

Other regents, of course, seek avenues to make up for their losses. Brecht ports no longer welcome Ilien's ships, and even the Khinasi eye the Ilienese with suspicion. Is this just the beginning of a war that could spill over into half of Cerilia?

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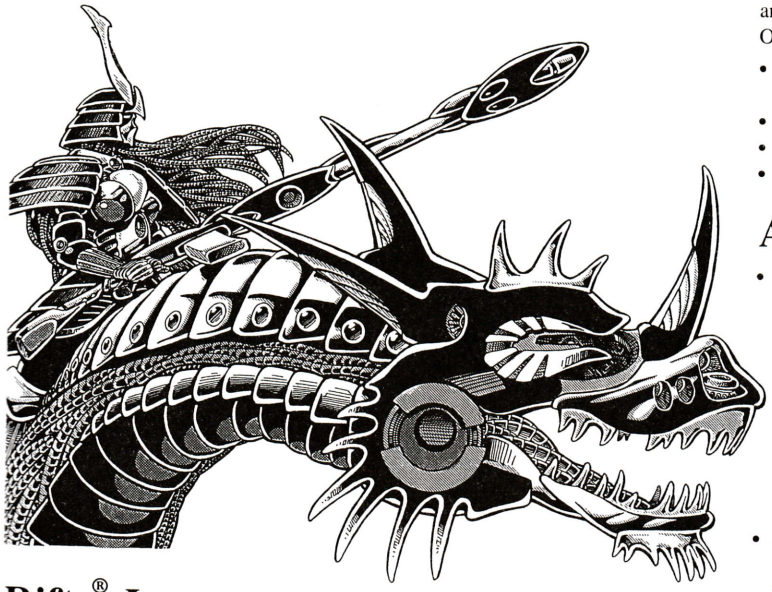

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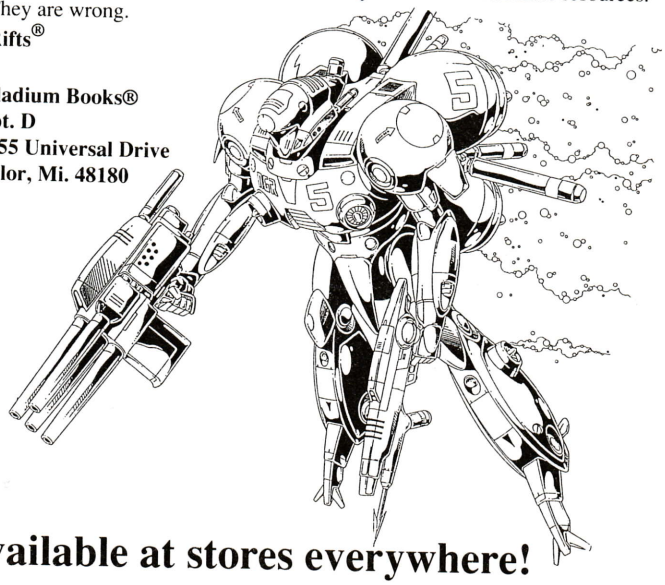

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A Knife Between the Shoulder Blades . . .

HIRED KILLER

by Ed Stark

Artwork by David Kooharian

Just about every character in just about every roleplaying game has been a hired killer at some point in time. In games that employ archetypes, templates, or other pregenerated or partially pregenerated characters (like FASA's SHADOWRUN*, West End Games' STAR WARS*, or White Wolf's VAMPIRE* RPG), mercenaries, thugs, and bounty hunters are popular choices. Most RPGs have elements of violence inherent to their systems, and a character who is good at inflicting violence can, at many times during an adventure, be very useful.

But few RPG characters are actually *assassins*. The difference between an assassin and a mercenary or any other hired thug is one of degree—a mercenary is hired to kill, true, and a thug is often hired for the same reason, but none do it with the precision and forethought of the assassin. The assassin is the contemplative murderer—he plans, and he acts, all for one purpose . . . to eliminate his target.

To kill.

As a result, many RPGs shy away from assassins as player characters—and, even if they condone the character type, the players seldom truly run them as assassins. Usually, the player character was an assassin who has gotten into "a related line of work," or he is still an assassin but does not operate in the same manner as before. Gamemasters use assassins occasionally—as villains or catalysts for adventure—but even they hold off from getting inside the assassin's head.

And that brings us to what an assassin is: A murderer. He might be a killer-for-hire or a political intriguer or a mercenary who has moved up (or down) in the world, but he has placed a price on life, whether it be gold, favors, political strength, or something else entirely. He has reduced murder to its simplest level and elevated it to an art. The art of the assassin.

Quantifying the Killer

There are several classic types of assassin a gamemaster might choose to use in his campaign. There are advantages and roleplaying pitfalls to all of them, but they are an interesting lot, to be sure. The following is only a partial list of these assassin archetypes, but they'll give you a little poison to inject into your campaign.

The Lone Wolf

Let's start out with a type the player characters and the gamemaster can probably empathize with: the Lone Wolf. The Lone Wolf assassin is often a wandering killer who takes jobs for hire and then moves on, hoping to survive to the next town, continent, or planet. The Lone Wolf is often haunted by some traumatic memory or secret from his past, and he uses assassination as a means to survive while he deals with his ghosts.

The Lone Wolf should be run by the gamemaster as a character the PCs get to know. Maybe he was hired to eliminate

Vlad Taltos

11th-level male human Assassin Thief

Alignment:	Neutral
Armor Class:	6 (3 when fencing with rapier)
Hit Points:	46
Strength:	13
Dexterity:	18
Constitution:	14
Intelligence:	17
Wisdom:	12
Charisma:	15

Weapon Proficiencies: Fencing blades (dagger/dirk, knife/stiletto, main-gauche, rapier, sabre), small throwing weapons (dagger/dirk, dart, hand/throwing axe, knife/stiletto, shuriken), Eastern fencing (3 slots).

Armor: None.

Weapons: Vlad typically carries a rapier. In addition, he generally has 30 or more small weapons hidden in his cloak, collar, belt, sleeve, etc. These usually include throwing daggers, darts, a garrot, and several others.

Equipment: *Spellbreaker*, a magical, semi-sentient chain that looks like gold but is much harder. It is Vlad's most valuable protection against magic. It sometimes moves on its own, like a snake. It dispels any sorcerous force on contact as an automatic *dispel magic*. When Vlad uses *Spellbreaker* (usually by whirling it about), *any* spell directed toward him requires an attack roll against AC 5 (Vlad's normal AC, with a −1 bonus for *Spellbreaker*); if the attack roll fails, Vlad has intercepted the spell with *Spellbreaker*, dispelling it without harmful effect.

Thieving abilities: PP 85%; OL 75%; F/RT 75%; MS 50%; HS 90%; DN 40%; CW 80%; RL 0%. Vlad also has a 90% chance to remain unnoticed in a crowd of people, moving with the flow so as to avoid drawing attention to himself.

Witchcraft: Vlad is an accomplished witch, meaning that he can cast several spells from the following schools: divination, conjuration/summoning, and abjuration. On occasion, he can manage a spell from the schools of alteration or enchantment/charm. While Vlad has a very limited selection of spells, he has been known to create new spells.

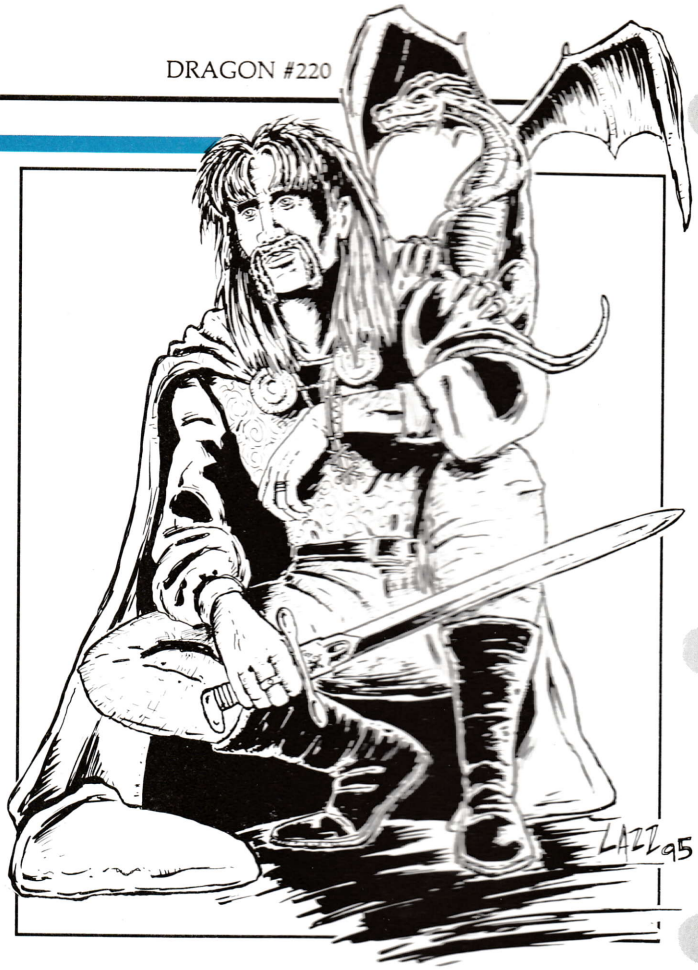
Familiar: Vlad has a familiar, a *jhereg* named Loiosh. A jhereg is a dragonet scavenger, similar to a pseudodragon. Loiosh is in constant telepathic contact with Vlad, referring to him as "boss." Loiosh is a hunter and scavenger with a wicked sense of humor and a sarcastic wit.

Loiosh: INT low (7); AL N; AC 3; HD 2; hp 14; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1–2/1–2/1–3; SA poisonous bite; SZ T (2′ long).

Sorcery: Vlad is also a sorceror, able to call upon a link with a powerful artifact (the *Orb*), shaping power from it for various purposes. In terms of the AD&D® game, the *Orb* is an immensely powerful psionic receptacle to which every citizen of the Dragaeran Empire has a link. Vlad typically pulls energy from it to teleport, but he can perform a few other minor tricks with it, such as checking the time.

Other Abilities: Because he is the reincarnation of the brother of Kieron the Conquerer, Vlad can *summon chaos*. So far, Vlad has been able only to do so only once. He lacks the knowledge and practice to exert control over raw chaos, and he hasn't been willing to experiment further.

Appearance: Vlad is a human, or Easterner, in the Dragaeran Empire. Dragaerans are taller, stronger, and longer-lived than humans. To them, humans are a lesser race, oppressed throughout



the empire. All Dragaerans belong to one of 17 great houses, each named for (and sharing certain characteristics of) a certain animal.

Vlad's father ran a restaurant in the empire's capital of Adrilankha, eventually earning enough money to buy the title of baronet in the House of the Jhereg. House Jhereg is basically a criminal organization that runs gambling, prostitution, and other shady activities throughout the empire.

As a human among Dragaerans, Vlad had a rough childhood, regularly suffering beatings from Dragaeran thugs. He learned to hate them, and he learned to fight. Whenever he found an opportunity to harm Dragaerans, he took it.

As a teen, he worked as a bouncer in a gambling establishment, then became an enforcer responsible for the collection of debts. Before long, he was hired to assassinate a Dragaeran. Assassinations allow Vlad to vent his hatred for Dragaerans; he never assassinates other humans. He has a wide variety of skills, as well as a vast network of sources and contacts for information, and a number of highly skilled friends. He is a highly skilled killer who enjoys planning the jobs, considering himself an artist.

When forced into melee, Vlad typically fights with a rapier, using a special style created by the Easterners. By presenting only one side of his body, Vlad gains a bonus to his AC; the style also confuses many Dragaerans, who are used to fighting with sword and dagger, facing an opponent directly and exposing the front of the body. Vlad is also very fond of throwing small pointy objects at opponents to injure and confuse them, and he occasionally poisons them. Vlad also makes full use of his partner and familiar, Loiosh, who attacks opponents and helps in surveillance activities.

At the end of the novel *Jhereg*, Vlad controls a territory in south Adrilankha, with an organization that runs gambling, prostitution, and other activities.

Vlad Taltos is a character created by Steven Brust and appears in the "Adventures of Vlad Taltos" series, which includes such excellent novels as *Jhereg* and *Yendi*. Vlad's description appears here with the kind permission of the author.

one of them or someone under their protection, and he has failed (or succeeded!) and survived. He may be betrayed or double-crossed by his employer, and he may seek out the PCs and surrender whatever knowledge or skills he has to them, in the hopes of achieving revenge or recompense from those who wronged him.

He has haunted eyes, a grim demeanor, and, often, both physical and emotional scars. He is often noble and sad, and many PCs will see him as someone who was, or could have been, great once . . . and the more empathic of them will see him as someone they could be.

The Lone Wolf never sticks around after his job is done. Many times, he dies after achieving, or partially achieving, his current mission—leaving the PCs to carry on. He may pass on some of his ghosts to the player characters, hoping they can lay them to rest.

The best example of the Lone Wolf assassin is perhaps the archetype of his class—the main character from *Shogun Assassin*, a Japanese martial arts movie that deals with a noble samurai, an executioner, who is forced into exile with his infant son. He must hire out as a ronin, and an assassin, while fighting the rival clan who would end his line. He has a code of honor; he is noble in the extreme; and he carries the only things he still cares about with him—his honor and his son. (First Comics printed a series of comics about his adventures—*Lone Wolf and Cub*, translated from the Japanese.)

The Anti-Hero

Like the Lone Wolf, the Anti-Hero assassin is someone most PCs and gamemasters will empathize with, if only because he is often fighting against those who the PCs end up butting heads against themselves. But, where the PCs try to work within the system or confront their foes openly, the Anti-Hero employs more surreptitious means to get his own way . . . means that can put him at odds with the party.

And this is a good place for him. The Anti-Hero represents, especially in an heroic campaign, a line that the PCs will not cross. They fight in the open, they kill if they must, but the Anti-Hero is the master of the hidden plot, the intrigue, and the secret strike. Sometimes, the PCs are forced to stop or strike against the Anti-Hero because, even though they can sympathize with his cause, they cannot condone his methods.

For most gamemasters, this is a narrow bridge to walk. How do you show your PCs the "simple" solution to a problem (i.e., letting the Anti-Hero assassin do what he does best) without risking that they take it? Certainly, an AD&D® paladin and a group of Lawful Good characters should try to stop the Anti-Hero assassin from performing his dishonorable task, but will a group of CYBERPUNK* RPG solos do the same? Probably not—unless the gamemaster can figure out a way.

The best method is to appeal to the player characters' self-interest. Perhaps the Anti-Hero could solve one problem by killing his target, but only open up 10 new ones in doing so. Perhaps the PCs need the target alive, or at least able to talk, but the Anti-Hero doesn't care . . . he just needs the death for some reason.

If the PCs also respect or empathize with the Anti-Hero, this makes that assassin type that much more applicable. They can't just kill him off, not without going against their own consciences or desires. So what do they do? Solving such dilemmas is the essence of roleplaying.

Steven Brust's "Vlad Taltos" series (about a human assassin in a fantasy world dominated by elves) contains an excellent example of an Anti-Hero assassin. (See the sidebar for Vlad's AD&D game statistics.) The main character spends most of the novels wrestling with problems of assassination, conscience, and self-control. He is someone the reader can empathize—and even identify—with, without condoning what he does or why he does it.

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The Guild Assassin

"The Assassin's Guild" in almost any game setting is implausible, but it can exist. What is more likely is that assassins are kept on retainer by political, social, or economic organizations who do the dirty work of removing those who oppose the "guild's" interests.

Sometimes, these Guild Assassins work for many different organizations with common interests. They set rates for jobs and rules for conduct. These assassins are valued for their anonymity, professionalism, and convenience—once they lose any one of these things, they are useless to all concerned.

A useless assassin is seldom transferred to another department.

The Guild Assassin is the least likely to be sympathetic to the player characters. Unless the PCs are playing in a setting that provides for the use of assassins-for-hire (such as TSR's BIRTHRIGHT™ setting), the player characters are most likely trying to stop the assassin and keep whoever hired him from replacing him.

Oddly enough, PCs who were once assassins often come from this loathsome type. The Guild explains their training, their current position (free-lance), and often some of their contacts or nemeses. It provides a good background.

It is important to remember the character of the Guild Assassin when constructing him for use in a campaign. He wishes to remain anonymous, professional, and convenient for his employers. He will not jeopardize his life or his professional standing on one particular job, nor will he usually make the kind of mistakes an impassioned Lone Wolf or a reckless Anti-Hero might. Everything he does will be slow, methodical, and by-the-book. If the PCs could get hold of "the book," they would be better able to stop him. Otherwise, he is a terror to beat.

And that is what makes the Guild Assassin so interesting to a campaign. The gamemaster should construct an adventure, or series of adventures, around him. Perhaps the PCs must stop the assassination of some important or wealthy person to prevent a carefully-masterminded plot from succeeding.

To create such an adventure, the gamemaster must set up the scenario, organize the NPCs, and construct a plot. He should try to take the unpredictability of the PCs into account, but he should not change his Guild Assassin's plans if the PCs do not telegraph their moves. It can be like a chess board—the PCs move and the Guild Assassin moves. Only the endgame resolves the encounter.

And, if the first Guild Assassin fails, there is probably another one on the way . . .

The Political Assassin

The last type of assassin is one of the broadest categories and, often, the most devastating. The Political Assassin is not a hireling, not a tragic figure, and seldom a hero—but at times he has the qualities of all three. In addition, he is striking out for what he *believes*—not for money, not for honor, and not for some purely personal reason. He thinks that what he is doing is *right* and *necessary*. And that makes him frightening.

The Political Assassin might be a fanatic, and his desire to kill might cloud his judgement. On the other hand, that fanaticism might focus his abilities and his concentration, making him a living weapon directed at his target. Many times, the Political Assassin hopes to be a martyr to a cause, not caring if he is apprehended, tortured, or killed, as long as he gets what he wants.

Fortunately, most of these assassins do not disguise themselves well . . . at least, not if the PCs know what they are looking for. And that's the only way to run the scenario, unless you are looking for a revenge factor, or a series of multiple assassinations to be solved—because a killer who is willing to die is very difficult to stop.

There are exceptions, of course. In Steve Perry's *The Man Who Never Missed,* the main character becomes what could be termed a Political Assassin, even though he never kills anyone—he just incapacitates them by using a special drug. His goal is to prove to the galaxy that one man, alone, can make a difference and become a legend. It is vital to his plan that he neither be discovered nor caught until he has achieved his goal.

If the Political Assassin has a complex agenda such as this one, he is more stoppable. The PCs can be a continual monkey wrench in his plans, and they can distract and annoy the Political Assassin so much that he makes mistakes, loses his cool, and eventually attempts to eliminate them instead of his target. That may be their only way of stopping him.

Twisting the Knife

So how, and why, would you introduce these deadly characters to your campaign? Of what use are they, if not as simple adventure catalysts or villains to be fought and vanquished? Do they serve a role other than a living weapon in someone else's hand?

The assassin should always be *discovered,* not announced. Perhaps the PCs' informants, friends, or even enemies (with the proper story motivation) inform them that some person or persons are targeted for assassination—and only they can do something about it. Maybe the PCs run into operatives of the assassin (or the assassin himself) in the course of their own adventure and must decide what to do about his plot. Or perhaps one of the PCs is the target of an assassin, and only learns of it after a failed attempt (or a successful one, if he can be brought back to life in the game world).

The assassin should complicate the PCs' lives. Most often, assassins intrude on the players' plans and get in the way of the characters' lives. They should be part of greater plots and machinations, not a sole story unto themselves. Certainly, everything else could take a back seat to the assassin once he is found, but it is much more fun for the PCs to remain outside the plot (except, perhaps, as targets) until they can turn the tables on the hunter and make him the hunted.

The role assassins play should, likewise, be complex. Few people hire, or become, assassins because their neighbors forgot to return the snow-shovel. No, assassination is a serious plot device. Even having one character try to kill another openly is not as serious as hiring an assassin to do it. There is something about assassination that makes simple assault, manslaughter, or murder seem less unwholesome.

Many times, the only way to truly stop an assassination plot is to change something unrelated to the plot itself. For example, an assassin might go after a religious leader, not because the assassin (or whoever hired him) disagrees with his views, or personally dislikes him, but because the death of the leader would prompt some other desirable action—perhaps a riot among the assassin's enemies, or the appointment of a more favorable leader to the religion's top position.

The PCs must wade through all this to uncover the truth. It should not be simple, it should not be straightforward and, for the characters, it should not be fun. Smart players may enjoy themselves (amid periods of great frustration), matching wits with the assassin and deciphering clues about the plot along the way. And, of course, they have to watch out for assassins at their backs as well. Someone who would hire one assassin would probably hire more . . . and only a few assassins are particular about who they kill to get at their targets.

Playing It to the Hilt

When using assassins, of whatever type, in your campaign world, play them as characters with goals, plans, and personalities. Too often, the assassin-as-catalyst or assassin-as-villain degenerates into a cookie-cutter encounter in the dead of night, meant only to spur on the adventure. While this is as acceptable as any gamemaster tool, it devalues the devastating effect a true assassin, rather than a hired thug or gun-for-hire, can have on a game.

Assassins are more often, like unnatural disasters, waiting to completely change the lives of those around them. They are deadly foes and questionable friends and they can keep your players on the edge of their seats . . . if they are more than just a knife in the dark. Ω

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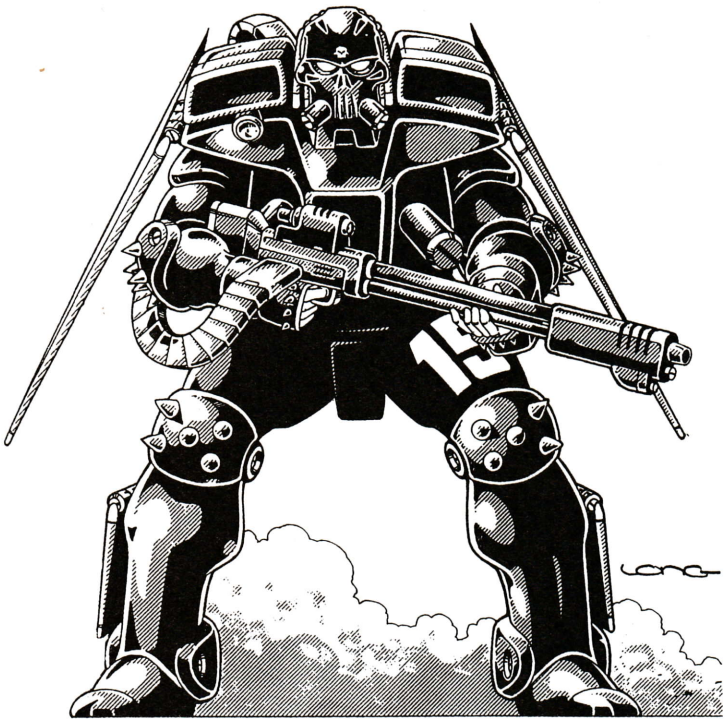

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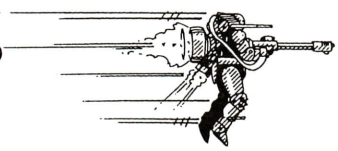

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by Lachlan MacQuarrie
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The *Complete Wizard's Handbook* threw down a gauntlet to DMs everywhere, when it explained how to design a new school of magic but warned "Designing new magic schools is one of the DM's toughest jobs . . ." (page 22). Well, here's one answer to that challenge—the School of Apportation—the movement of things or qualities through magic.

History

It has recently been demonstrated that the mechanism underlying such spells as *fly* and *blink* is fundamentally different from the mechanism underlying other alteration spells. To wit, the mage Falcor has shown that simple movement is an *essential process,* just like alteration or conjuration, and can be used to create spells.

Since magical movement is called "apportation," Falcor proposed that a new school of magic—the School of Apportation—had been discovered hiding among the Alteration spells. Skeptics among the transmuter's guild were quickly silenced by Falcor's successful transfer of the color green from a blade of grass to a cat. Although some illusionists offered to duplicate the feat, the point was made, and many apprentices flocked to Falcor's laboratory to study this new form of magic.

Description

Spells of this school enable the caster to channel magical energy in such a way as to move a thing from one known location to another. The thing being moved can be a person, an object, or even an attribute, such as weight or knowledge.

Specialist name
Transfuser. The rival term, "apporter," reminds most people of baggage handlers.

Allowed races
Humans and half-elves can become transfusers.

Ability requirements
Keen intuition is necessary to separate that which must be moved from that which must stay behind. In addition, the ability to maintain a clear mental image of locations requires above(nd)average willpower. Accordingly, specialists in this school must have a minimum Wisdom score of 15.

Saving throw modifiers
All opponents suffer a −1 saving throw penalty against an apportation spell cast by a transfuser. In addition, a transfuser enjoys a +1 saving throw bonus against apportation spells.

Bonus spells and acquired powers
A transfuser can memorize an extra spell at each spell level, providing that at least one of the memorized spells is from the school of apportation.

When a transfuser reaches 17th level, he rolls twice for inaccuracy when casting any *teleport* spell (such as *teleport object* or *teleport other*) and takes the best result.

When a transfuser reaches 20th level, he gains the ability to cast a special form of *proof from teleportation* (a third-level spell from FORGOTTEN REALMS® *Adventures,* page 50), in addition to his other memorized spells. This requires no verbal, somatic, or material components, and has a casting time of 1 (a moment's concentration). The spell safeguards a 20-yard-radius area from all *teleportation* magic; no one can either enter or leave the area via any form of apportation. The area of effect is centered on the caster and moves with him and lasts for two hours (or until *dispelled* or voluntarily dropped).

Opposition schools
The transfuser is denied access to the schools of Abjuration and Conjuration/Summoning.

Spell Analysis

Low-Level Spells
Until he reaches fifth level, the transfuser has personal mobility spells (such as *jump*), the very useful *knock,* and some utility spells at his disposal. While *little bird* is useful mainly in the lab, *haste* and *slow* have more immediate uses.

Transpose is a more general purpose spell. Although its long casting time limits its use in combat, it has a variety of other uses. Climbing is much easier with some weight removed, and mouseholes become doorways when you stand only two inches tall. Borrowing a large volume, on the other hand, can make you a big negotiator.

Mid-Level Spells
At 6th to 13th level, the transfuser really starts to take off. A good selection of movement spells (including *teleport*) turn him into a globe-trotter, as well as the fastest retreater in the party. *Telekinesis, rip,* and *teleport other* have uses in combat (or can simply send friends south for

Table 1:
School of Apportation

1st level	2nd level	3rd level	4th Level	5th Level
Feather Fall	Bloodbridge*	Blink	Dig	Rip*
Jump	Knock	Fly	Dimension Door	Telekinesis
Little Bird*	Levitate	Haste	Transfuse*	Teleport
March*	Mouse*	Slow		
Tipple*	Speed*	Teleport Object*		
Ventriloquism	Whispering Wind	Transpose*		

6th Level	7th Level	8th Level	9th Level
Move Earth	Reverse Gravity	Mass Teleport Without Error*	Astral Spell
Part Water	Teleport Without Error	Sink	Skycastle
Teleport Other	Mass Teleport*		Succor

An asterisk (*) indicates a new spell. Other spells may be cross-listed under original school, or not, at the DM's option.

Table 2: Teleport Accuracy

Destination	High	On Target	Low
Very familiar	01-02	03-99	00
Studied carefully	01-04	05-98	99-00
Seen casually	01-08	09-96	97-00
Viewed once	01-16	17-92	93-00
Never seen	01-32	33-84	85-00

Teleporting high means arriving 10′ above ground for every 1% he is below the "On Target" range. This could be as high as 320′. Arriving low means instant death, as "On Target" is always on a solid surface.

The destination must be a solid surface, not inside a solid, liquid, or over empty air.

the winter). *Teleport other* can send a friend on a commando raid or (in a pinch) can displace an enemy temporarily.

Transfuse can give a weak character a temporary boost, and it is useful when the PC with a crucial ability or power can't go on the mission. The elf who isn't allowed into a human council meeting can still lend her knowledge of diplomacy (Etiquette proficiency) to the barbarian who is. Evil transfusers can use this ability to seriously weaken their prisoners.

High-Level Spells

With the exception of *skycastle,* no new abilities appear at these levels, as the spells available to the 14th-18th level transfuser are extensions of lower-level spells (*mass teleport,* for example). *Sink* is the only combat spell.

Ethos

Befitting someone who can summon a drink from across the room or magically fly across a muddy road, the typical transfuser is a rather pudgy individual. Fetching and carrying is for others, with the result that transfusers are often lazy and out-of-shape.

This is not to say that transfusers never leave the lab—on the contrary, their easy access to rapid transit spells permits a wandering lifestyle, especially at higher levels. A transfuser is never happier than when "flying south for the winter" or "popping out to the lodge for a few days." A side effect of all this travel is the more cosmopolitan attitude of a transfuser, compared to his earthbound kin. Exposure to many different locales and types of people teaches the transfuser tolerance and diplomacy.

A second characteristic of the apportation specialist flows from the nature of his studies. The transfuser does not create, conjure, or alter—instead, he moves something from Point A to Point B. At the core, each transfuser knows that there's no such thing as a free lunch. No particular alignment is favored by this school (good transfusers are conservationists, evil ones keep moving a lot), but a regard for the consequences of their actions is built in, resulting in very few chaotic transfusers.

Spell Descriptions

Little Bird (Apportation)
Level: 1 Components: V, S
Range: 10 yards CT: 1
Dur.: 1 turn + 1/lvl Save: None
Area of Effect: 1 object

By casting this spell, the caster can direct one object to fly through the air under his control. Although slow-moving (Movement Rate 6), the object can turn and stop on a dime (maneuverability class A) and respond instantly to the caster's mental commands. However, the affected object can weigh no more than 1 lb. per level of the caster.

Little bird is generally employed as a labor-saving device, because its uses in combat are limited. A transfuser attempting to wrest an object from an enemy, for example, must overcome the enemy's Strength. The enemy can hold onto the object by making a successful Strength check, with a −2 adjustment to the die roll. Alternatively, picking up loose objects with the spell and flying them at the enemy requires a successful attack roll and inflicts no more than 1-3 hp damage. Some transfusers, however, have been known to use this spell as a diversion (for instance, ringing a gong next to an enemy's head).

March (Apportation)
Level: 1 Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch CT: 1
Dur.: 1 hour/lvl Save: None
Area of Effect: 1 person/level

Casting this spell allows an encumbered person to walk at his normal unencumbered movement rate. Because the movement is powered by the spell, the person suffers no more fatigue than he would sitting in a chair for the same length of time.

This spell must be cast on a walking target—thus, the target must be able to lift his burden in the first place. The spell is dissipated when the target stops walking for more than one round or picks up more than his maximum encumbrance.

The material component of this spell is a pinch of pepper.

Tipple (Apportation)
Level: 1 Components: V, S, M
Range: 3 yards CT: 1
Dur.: Special Save: None
Area of Effect: 1 container

By casting this spell on a one-gallon or smaller container of liquid (such as a bottle or flask) the caster may, simply by a moment's concentration, send a mouthful of the liquid flying to his mouth to be swallowed. The liquid moves quickly enough to push a loose cork out of its container and nimbly enough to dodge intervening obstacles.

The spell lasts until the container is emptied or until any liquid is added to the container (thus, no more than one gallon per casting may be consumed). The spell can be cast on a potion bottle but has a 10% chance of turning the potion to water.

The material component is a hollow reed, which is destroyed in the casting.

Bloodbridge (Apportation, Necromancy)
Level: 2 Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch CT: 1 round
Dur.: Special Save: None
Area of Effect: Creature touched

Casting this spell allows the movement of blood from a donor, through the caster, into a recipient. Since at least some damage from combat is caused by blood loss, the transfused blood heals some of the recipient's wounds, at the expense of the donor. Basically, for each hit point restored to the recipient, the donor loses a point.

Although this is a healing spell, the amount of damage that can be healed is limited to 2 points + 1/level of caster. This is the daily maximum per recipient, not per donor. Although multiple donors can be used (each requiring a separate casting), the sum total of healing cannot exceed the maximum. In addition, because this spell merely replaces lost blood, it can heal only damage caused by blood loss (not by electrical shock, pummeling, poison, suffocation, and the like).

The donor may be anyone of the same species as the recipient (half-elves count as both human and elf). In a pinch, the caster himself may serve as the donor. Extracting blood from an unwilling donor is definitely an evil act, and an unwilling target must be immobilized for the entire round to cast the spell successfully—it cannot be cast on an unwilling recipient in melee.

The material components of this spell are two sharp needles (1 gp each), which are destroyed when the spell is complete.

Mouse (Apportation)
Level: 2 Components: V, S
Range: Touch CT: 2
Dur.: 1 hour/lvl Save: None
Area of Effect: One object

Casting this spell on an object (weighing less than 8 oz. + 1 oz. per level) causes that object to scurry off to a "safe place" and stay there. If searched for, the object eludes the search by scurrying from hiding place to hiding place at a Movement Rate of 6.

The object stops moving when the spell expires or the caster voluntarily drops the spell. The spell is automatically dispelled if any searcher touchs the object. Doing so requires a successful attack vs. AC 0 (the object is quite nimble).

The object returns to the caster if he so commands it.

Speed (Apportation)
Level: 2 Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch CT: 2
Dur.: 1 hr. + 1–4 t. Save: None
Area of Effect: Creature touched

This spell allows the recipient to run at twice his normal running rate with no fatigue. The speed gained also makes the person harder to hit (−2 bonus to Armor Class), but it does not permit any additional attacks per round. In addition, the spell ends if the runner stops running for more than one round.

The material component is a pair of specially constructed shoes, which must fit the recipient perfectly (minimum 100 gp value). The shoes are reusable but are rendered useless by any rips or tears—a new pair must then be made.

Teleport Object (Apportation)
Level: 3 Components: V,S
Range: Touch CT: 2
Dur.: Instantaneous Save: Special
Area of Effect: 1 object

By casting this spell, a wizard instantly transports a small object (weighing no more than 1 oz. + 2 oz. per level) to another location. Distance is not a factor, but interplanar transport is not possible. Like the *teleport* spell, accuracy depends on the caster's familiarity with the target location (see Table 2, below).

This spell may not be used to place objects within any solid, such as a wall or an enemy's spleen. Like all teleports, the destination must be a surface, not empty air or inside a solid or liquid.

Further, control of this spell improves with time. The 5th-level transfuser may *teleport* only nonmagical items, and then only if the item is unencumbered (not tied down or in someone's grasp). A 7th-level transfuser may *teleport* a magical item, but only at 9th level does he gain the skill necessary to affect an item in someone else's grasp.

To teleport an object held by someone else, the wizard must first make a successful attack roll to touch the object. As this is a "called shot," the mage suffers a −4 penalty to his attack roll and a +1 penalty to his initiative roll. The owner of the item may avoid the spell with a successful saving throw.

Since a sheet of parchment usually weighs less than two ounces, transfusers often use this spell to send written messages.

Transpose (Apportation)
Level: 3 Components: V, S, M
Range: 60 yards CT: 1 round
Dur.: 1 hour/lvl. Save: Special
Area of Effect: Special

The most mysterious of the transfuser's powers appears is the result of this spell—the ability to transfer *qualities* of an object or person to another object or person. With this spell, the eyes of a courtesan can be given the exotic golden color of a topaz, and a mage flying nearby can be given the weight of a rather large boulder.

Only weight, volume, or color can be transposed. When the spell is cast, the donor and the recipient exchange their respective amounts of the specified quality. In the above example, the topaz now is the color of a courtesan's eyes, and the nearby boulder now weighs as much as a mage.

The amount that can be moved depends on the caster's level:

Weight: Up to 200 lbs. plus 50 lbs. per level. Largely effects Encumbrance (see PHB, tables 47 and 48), although flying creatures may not be able to stay aloft (DM's option).

Volume: Up to one Size Code per five levels of the caster (round down). A 5th-9th level caster could change a Medium size creature to a Small or a Large, while a 10th-14th level caster could make it Tiny or Huge. Like *enlarge,* only strength and weight vary with volume—all other characteristics stay the same. Increase damage done and weight by 50% per size code enlarged, or decrease both by 25% per size code shrunk.

Color: This version of the spell has only cosmetic effects but may be used for disguise. Color may be moved to or from any object weighing 1,000 lbs. or less.

Transpose is not a perfect spell—the caster may never remove more than 99% of a subject quality. In addition, the apportation has a curious side effect. If the spell is directed at an unwilling target who successfully makes a successful saving throw vs. spells to avoid its effects, the caster must also immediately save or be affected by his own spell. Fortunately, a successful saving throw also damps out the spell before it affects other bystanders.

The material component of this spell is a miniature set of scales set with seven gems, each a different color of the rainbow. This item costs at least 500 gp, but it is reusable.

Transfuse (Apportation)
Level: 4 Components: V, S, M
Range: 3 yards CT: 1 turn
Dur.: 4 hours + 1/lvl Save: None
Area of Effect: Two creatures

A more potent version of *transpose,* this spell allows the transfer of specific parts of a person with those of another human, demihuman, or humanoid. For anyone willing to take the risk, heightened strength, increased willpower, or even a new set of abilities can be magically gained. Unlike *transpose,* however, there is no reciprocity. Instead of an exchange between two, this spell simply moves something from one person to the other. The recipient's gain is the donor's loss.

Some transfusions are easier than others. At 7th level, the caster can move one of the physical attributes (Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity). At 9th level, he can move one mental attribute (Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma). In either case, for each point gained by the recipient, the donor loses a point, up to a limit of six points by one casting. All benefits or penalties of the altered ability scores apply. (Of course, gaining a mage's high Intelligence does not also confer the mage's spells—but see below.)

Finally, at 12th level, the caster may move one complete ability from one person to another. One ability is defined as one proficiency (weapon or nonweapon); one language; the ability to cast one priest or mage spell once; or one thief or bard ability (Pick Pockets, Open Locks, Find/Remove Traps, Move Silently, Hide in Shadows, Detect Noise, Climb Walls, or Read Languages).

In each case, the success chance for the recipient with a new ability is the same as

for the donor who gave that ability, modified by situation. For example, a thief with an 80% chance to Move Silently gives this skill to a fighter in studded leather armor—which drops the 80% to 50% (PHB, Table 29).

This spell is not without risks. When the spell expires, the transfused material attempts to return to its natural place—but it might not make it. If the donor is more than three yards away from the recipient, the donor must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic to regain what he donated, with a −1 penalty to the roll for each 100 yards. If the saving throw fails, not only does the donor never regain the lost material, but he must also make an immediate saving throw vs. spells or lose a point of Constitution. The recipient suffers no ill effects from this loss beyond the material originally gained, but he may have alignment problems if he knowingly avoided the donor.

The material component of this spell is diamond dust worth at least 250 gp, consumed in the casting. Casting this spell on an unwilling donor is an evil act.

Rip (Apportation)
Level: 5 — Components: V,S,M
Range: 20 yds. +10/lvl — CT: 5
Dur.: 1 rd./lvl. — Save: Negates
Area of Effect: 1 creature or object

This is the most purely destructive of the transfuser's spells. While other spells (such as *telekinesis*) move an entire object, this spell moves *part* of an object in one direction while moving the rest of the object in a completely different direction. The resulting tug-of-war tears the object into two separate pieces—which kills most creatures outright.

As the movement is not especially rapid, damage builds up slowly. On the first round, the target takes 2 hp damage; on the second, an additional 4; on the third, an additional 6; and so on. By the fourth round, the target has taken 20 hp damage (2+4+6+8).

If cast on an object, the object must roll an item saving throw vs. crushing blow with a −4 penalty or be torn in half. If it fails, roll 1d12 to see how many rounds the object held together. The creature or object cannot weight more than 1,000 lbs.

As noted above, the movement is not especially rapid, and bystanders are in no danger from flying debris. A *dispel magic* dissipates the ripping force but does not repair damage already done. Once the *rip* is cast, further concentration by the caster is unnecessary.

The material component of this spell are two black gloves, without a speck of dust on them. These gloves cost 10 gp a pair and are consumed in the casting.

Teleport Other (Apportation)
Level: 6 — Components: V, S
Range: Touch — CT: 4
Dur.: Instantaneous — Save: Special
Area of Effect: 1 person

By casting this spell, a wizard instantly transports any one person other than himself to another location. Distance is not a factor, but interplanar transport is not possible. Like the *teleport object* spell, accuracy depends on the caster's familiarity with the target location (see Table 2, below), and the destination must be a surface, not inside solid or liquid matter. Unlike *teleport object*, however, the spell poses a slight risk to the caster, because teleporting a person inaccurately causes a psychic backlash. If the caster rolls a "Too High" or "Too Low" result when rolling for accuracy, he immediately loses one point of Constitution, permanently.

Casting this spell in combat requires a successful attack roll. In addition, the enemy may roll a saving throw vs. spells to negate the teleport. Any enemies with *teleport* experience (DM's option) gain a second saving throw vs. spells to affect the teleportation itself. If they succeed, they are teleported to a random location.

Mass Teleport (Apportation)
Level: 7 — Components: V, S
Range: Touch — CT: 1 round
Dur.: Instantaneous — Save: None
Area of Effect: Up to 12 people

By casting this spell, the caster instantly transports himself and up to 11 companions to another location. Distance is not a factor, but interplanar transport is not possible. Like the *teleport other* spell, accuracy depends on the caster's familiarity with the target location (see Table 2, below). Only one roll is made for the entire group being *teleported*, with "familiarity" referring to the caster's familiarity, not the group's.

While casting this spell, the caster stands in the center of a circle formed by his companions, who must hold hands for the entire round. Breaking this circle before the end of the round disrupts the spell.

Mass Teleport Without Error (Apportation)
Level: 8 — Components: V, S
Range: Touch — CT: 1 turn
Dur.: Instantaneous — Save: None
Area of Effect: Up to 12 people

This spell is similar to the *mass teleport* spell. The caster transports himself and up to 11 companions to any known location in his home plane with no chance of error.

Like *teleport without error*, travel to other planes is possible, but only to locations that the caster has previously studied carefully. No matter how careful this perusal was, there is a chance for mishap when traveling to another plane. Accordingly, the caster must roll for accuracy (table 2, below).

Again, breaking the circle before the end of the turn disrupts the spell.

Skycastle (Apportation)
Level: 9 — Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch — CT: 1 turn
Dur.: Permanent — Save: None
Area of Effect: 1 castle

Casting this spell on a castle or other building gives the castle the ability to fly, controlled by the caster's mental command. Although relatively slow (Movement Rate 30) and clumsy (maneuverability class E), the skycastle has a tremendous carrying capacity and can travel even when the caster is asleep, as it can maintain a particular course and speed unattended.

Siege engines and the like affect the *skycastle* normally, but do not remove the dweomer until the *skycastle* has been breached on all four sides. A successful *dispel magic* removes the spell, however. In both cases, the dweomer is so large and diffuse that it does not end immediatly. When negated, the spell takes time to drain, according to the following schedule: on round 1 the skycastle stops in mid–flight; on rounds 2-5 it sinks earthward at 10′ per round; rounds 6-9 it drops earthward at 100′ per round; and from round 10 on it plummets earthward. Plummeting more than 200′ destroys the skycastle and kills everyone within. If in doubt, assess falling damage versus the inhabitants normally, plus saving throws vs. death magic for those in danger of death from massive damage, as per the DMG.

Deliberately dropping the skycastle on a soft target such as a cottage or a living creature crushes the target. Dropping it on a hard target damages both structures equally.

To cast the spell, the mage must have an absolutely clear mental image of the skycastle—equal to that gained by overseeing its construction or walking every inch of it for at least one month. Reading a map or blueprints is not sufficient.

The material component of this spell is a beautifully appointed couch or sofa (1,000 gp minimum), which must be occupied by the caster for the entire turn. A new couch must be purchased for each casting.

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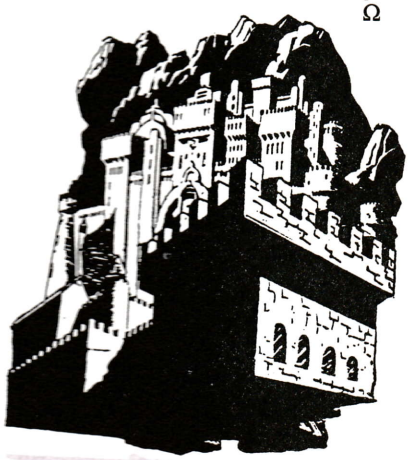

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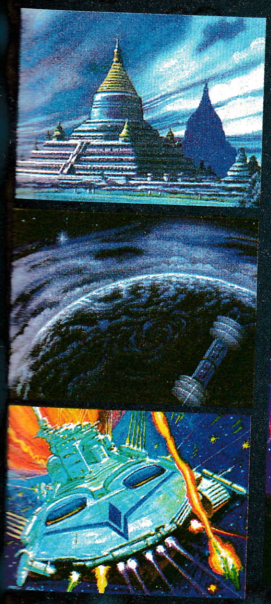

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Things I Learned at E3

Convention Report

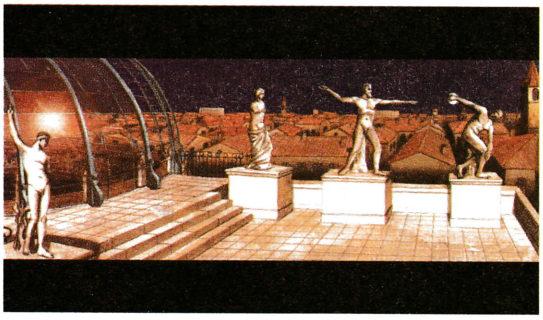
by David "Zeb" Cook

Artwork by

My editor, hearing that I was going to E3, asked me to give me a report on what I saw and learned there. (Actually, he only asked me because no one else was going.) So, here's what I told him.

1. It's not called E3 because this is its third year (there ain't no E1 or E2).
2. It's big.
3. People treat you nicer if you convince the convention staff to give you a press badge that says "DRAGON® Magazine" because the editor asked you to write up a piece on E3. Manufacturers think you have power. Distributors think you have power. Everybody stuffs presskits and buttons into your hands because they think you have power.
4. There's a war for your electronic gaming dollars shaping up out there on the horizon.
5. Computer gaming is not dead.

Prisoner of Ice (I-Motion)



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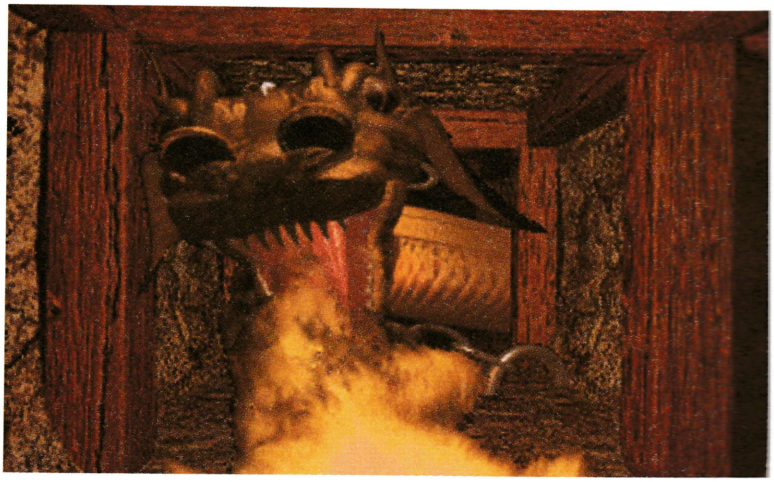
Stonekeep (SSI)



So that's what I told him.

And he said, "That's not enough. Tell me more." Actually he kind of snarled it, so . . .

Point #1: It's called E3 because it's real name is Electronic Entertainment Expo—E3. Get it? Pretty clever of them. E3 is kind of the replacement for the summer CES (Consumer Electronics Show) that used to be held in Chicago, until the electronic game and software guys got tired of sharing their space with the latest TVs, cellular phones, and hi-tech vacuum cleaners and decided they could have a show of their own. Of course, some things didn't change, and the biggest of these was that E3 is for THE TRADE. That means that average folks like every kid itching to get through the doors and try out the newest, not-yet-released games from SEGA or 3DO can't. Unless, of course, he happens to be the buyer for Wacky Arnold's Software Mega-Chain, at which point the dealers are very, very nice to him. E3 is where the folks who make the hardware and the software show off what's coming for the next year (or two) and try to convince other folks to place big orders (buyers) or to write nice things about them (press). Add to that developers who want a job, manufacturers who want to see what the competition's up to, and kids who've manage to sneak through the doors and that leads to . . .

Point #2: It's big. It filled the Los Angeles Convention Center. Three days of walking and talking didn't cover it all.

Point #3: See Point #1. I ain't saying no more about that, see?

Point #4: Actually, there's several wars. The biggest war, by far, is for the folks who like game machines. The new generation of 64-bit (read "better, faster pictures") platforms is here. Sony, a newcomer to the game machine field, unveiled the Playstation, along with titles ranging from 3-D modeled fight games (Tenshinden) to flight sims (*Warhawk*). SEGA countered with the SEGA Saturn, its 64-bit entry and games such as *Panzer Dragoon*, a 3D flight-sim, dragon-style! Both are priced in the around the $200-400 dollar range, play CD-ROMs and naturally you can't use one with the other. Not to be outdone, 3DO previewed their M2 player which promises a PowerPC chip in a game machine, though no date was certain for this advancement. Although the Playstation's graphics were more dazzling, it's too early to choose a victor in

this battle. Quality of games and marketing will make or break these warriors.

For those computer people out there, the Mac-PC war is all but over. For those who ain't guessed by now, if you want to play games you'd better have a PC—and it better have a CD-ROM drive. The Mac is not dead, but with the PC's installed base larger than the galaxy, it's clear who gets the lion's share of new releases. As for the CD-ROM drive—well, you just need it. Sound and graphic expectations keep going up, ticularly for the computer role-playing games out there. So with that, let's artfully segue into . . .

Point #5: Just what the heck is coming? In two words: Lots—someday. Computer role-players have loads of titles to look forward to, but with most being promised in the fall of this year to the spring and even summer of '96, hold your breath only if you've got good lungs. Among the biggest news, Interplay announced it's creating a 50-man division just to produce its AD&D® license titles for the PLANESCAPE™ and FORGOTTEN REALMS® lines (which might compete with its own *Stonekeep* and *Kingdom* titles) while SSI, formerly exclusive holders of the TSR license, were going ahead with their own fantasy world, *Thunderscape*. Drawing on yet more AD&D® experience, New World Computing was touting *Anvil of Dawn*, from the developers of *Ravenloff* (sic) and *Menzoberranzan*. Believe it or not, Gary Gygax is returning to the gaming scene with the announcement of *Hunters of Ralk* from Cyberdreams (though not until at least spring of '96). Elsewhere in the CRPG arena, KOEI, the makers of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (installment IV coming) revealed their entry into the fantasy realm with *Balor of the Evil Eye*. Keeping with their penchant for historical things, this one's based on Celtic legend and lore.

Science fiction gamers were far from forgotten. The biggest splash was the *Johnny Mnemonic* game from Sony. Boasting MPEG video and shot in conjunction with the movie (though with different actors), the game may be better than the movie. Competition came in the form of Interplay's *Netrunner*. For the Star Trek crowd, Simon and Schuster Interactive was previewing *Star Trek Klingon* and promising it would have full-motion video and voice recognition (!) as it tested your knowledge of Klingon customs, manners, and speech. Let's hope you don't have to spit at the screen! Playmates was also showing the Super Nintendo and Sega Genesis *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine—Crossroads of Time* in an effort to have the most trademarks in a single title. New-

Continued on page 38

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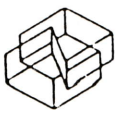

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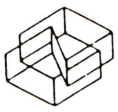

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DICE ADVICE

DRAGON DICE™ Strategy Tips

Rolling with the Punches

by Lester Smith

Imagine a strategy game of combat among fantasy armies. You've got a board, and a bunch of playing pieces, and some dice, right?

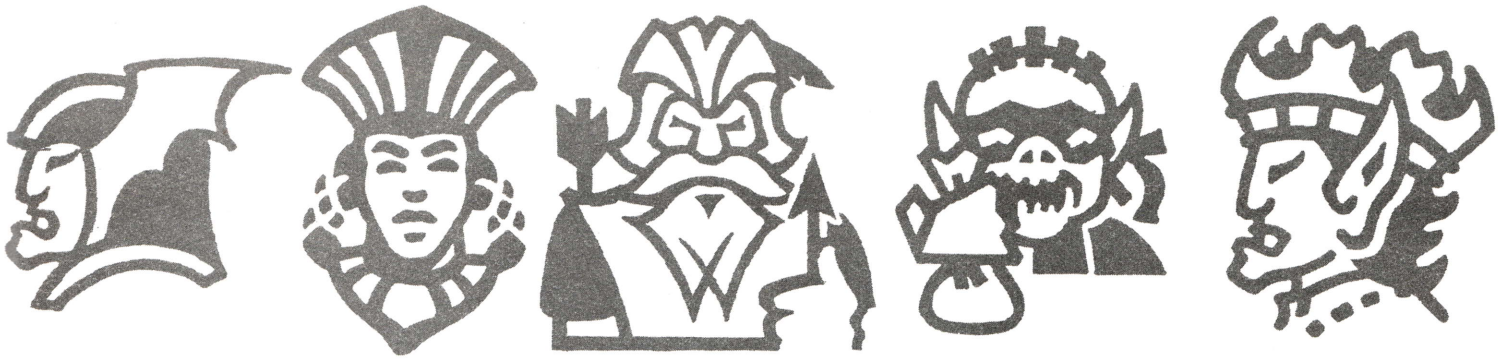
Now merge the playing pieces and dice together, so that each piece becomes a unique die. Then cut the board into sections, and make each section another unique die. What do you have now? The DRAGON DICE™ game: fantasy combat done completely with dice.

Of course, the game is still a contest of strategy. And that's what this article is all about: making the most of strategy when playing.

The tips I'm about to give you reflect my own distinct opinions about how to maximize your chances of winning. I've certainly seen different yet valid approaches from other people, and I've been beaten by some of them. But not often. The insights and tricks below have served me well thus far.

Set-Up Techniques

Victories in the DRAGON DICE game don't happen by accident. Clever players stack the odds in their favor from the very beginning. Here are some ways of doing just that.



Use a Combination of Races: Some people like to build their forces from a single race. But I definitely prefer combining at least two races. In part, I suppose, it's a matter of role-playing: I enjoy the idea of two peoples banding together against a common foe. But it's also a matter of flexibility. Dwarves are tough fighters, which makes them great for pressing an opponent in melee, or for defending a captured terrain. But they can't do much at missile range. Coral elves and lava elves are much better with missile attacks, making them extremely useful for peppering an opponent from a terrain away. On the other hand, unless they are in their native terrain, their forces are fragile, and they tend to rout from any return attack at all. The other races each have comparable strengths and weaknesses.

Combining races, mixes the strengths of both, while ameliorating the weaknesses of each. For instance, assigning a few dwarven footmen to an army of coral elves does wonders for the army's morale. Even better, a flight of elvish missiles from a terrain away helps soften up the enemy in preparation of an allied dwarven charge.

Furthermore, considering that DRAGON DICE players all choose their terrains secretly, you might find your single-race force facing nothing but hostile terrain. A dual-race force is twice as able to cope with a wide range of terrain types.

Seize the Initiative: When I play the DRAGON DICE game, I like to take my turn first. I want to be the person who chooses which terrain becomes frontier, to pick something to my advantage. And I want to be the first to react to the final allocation of opposing forces. Sure, this means I have to commit my troops before anyone else does, but that's a trade-off I'm willing to make.

To have the best chance of going first, you have to commit a lot of dice to your horde. That way, you have the best chance of rolling lots of maneuver results and seizing the initiative. Naturally, choosing to put the bulk of your dice in the horde means that your home army and campaign army are going to be small. But if you get to go first, you can always pull them into reserve, if necessary, before anyone else gets a chance to act.

Choose Your Home Terrain Well: Deciding upon a home terrain is fairly simple. Just select the terrain that best serves your home army. By having your home terrain and home army match up, you strengthen that army, making the locale less appealing to other players' armies.

Ideally, I like to put archers or spellcasters at the home terrain, or a mix of both. In the case of missile users, it's great to have a tower on the eighth face. That way, if the troops maneuver to that face, they can shoot at any other terrain on the table, while gaining the eighth face's defensive benefits against any return attacks.

Coral elves in coastland terrain with a tower make a wonderful combination. At that terrain, they save well against attacks and can double both their air and water magic. For the same reason, lava elves in a highland tower do well, or amazons (from the first Kicker Pack) in flatland with a tower.

Another good choice for the home terrain is the temple. By protecting your home army from black magic, it further boosts that army's defense.

Pick the Best Frontier Terrain: If you become the first player, you decide the frontier terrain, but this is a bit more difficult than choosing a home.

If you have lots of missile troops, coastland and flatland are good frontier terrains. Their high percentage of missile faces augments the ability of armies there to fire on any other terrain.

On the other hand, if you are facing lots of opposing missile units and want to reduce missile fire, choose highland or swampland for the frontier. Most importantly, do not choose flatland as frontier if you are facing amazons. Their combination of missile and maneuver ability can be deadly in that position.

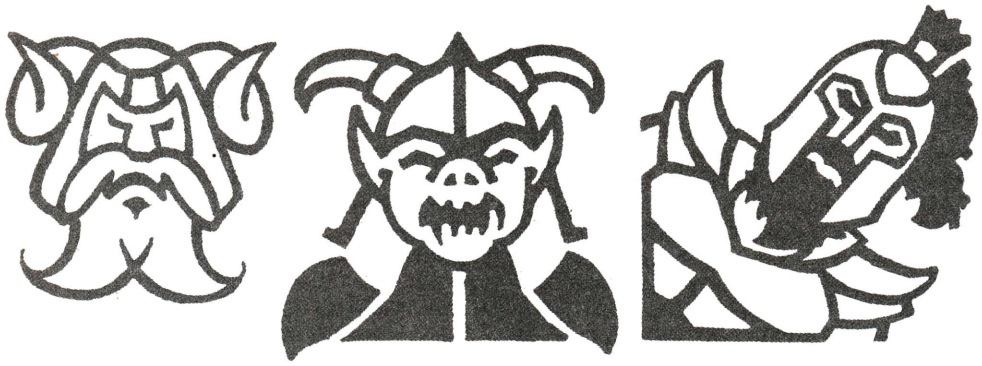
A tower is wasted, of course, on the frontier. Missile users there can already hit any other location in play, so a tower doesn't help. A temple or city is generally a better choice, the one helping defend its owning army, and the other helping to bolster that army with new recruits. On occasion, standing stones make a good choice, allowing your army there a wider range of magical effects.

But no matter what you do, the frontier is always difficult to hold. Choose something that makes life difficult for your opponents.

Playing the Mid-game

Making the best of mid-game play requires that you keep your options open and use your armies to absolutely best effect. Here are some tips to keep you headed toward a win.

Don't Cluster Your Forces: The most important thing to remember in playing the mid-game is to keep at least two armies in play at all times. Often I see people pulling all of their units back into one huge, defensive force. By doing this, they lose one chance to act each turn and they also give their opponents a single target to focus on. Even if your second army is nothing but a few dice in reserve, it offers at least a chance for a helpful spell to aid your primary army. And if nothing else, that smaller army may draw an attack, leaving your main army stronger.



Coordinate Your Marches: Hand in hand with the rule above is the strategy of casting magic with your first march, in order to enhance your second action. Whether you hope to soften up a foe with lightning bolts, or just want to bog an army down in mud so that yours can maneuver to a better terrain face, the strategy is the same. As mentioned above, even a few paltry dice in the reserves might yield enough magic results to give your second action a better chance of success.

Plan Early and Often: It has been said that a good plan lasts only until first contact with the enemy. Because you cannot be certain before play starts just what forces your opponents will have, and because there is no way of predicting at what range combat will start at each terrain, you must be flexible at the beginning of the game.

But this applies through the rest of the game as well. You must be ready to abandon a terrain if the battle there is going against you. Don't get locked into fighting a losing battle. And you should be poised to shift dice to terrain where your opponents become weak (preferably from fighting one another). As other players are taking their turns, plan your next move. Reacting quickly to changing conditions can mean the difference between victory and defeat.

Keep Moving Forward: Often, it is tempting to sit back and dump awesome spells on your enemies. But this doesn't directly lead toward winning the game. If they keep pressing toward that eighth face while your forces are making magic, chances are they'll survive the magical onslaught long enough to capture the terrain and win. Use magic as a tool to bolster conventional attacks, not as an end unto itself.

Kick 'Em While They're Down: The one exception to moving ever forward is when an enemy routs. Unless your army is entrenched (i.e. has captured the terrain), you should almost always have it pursue a routing opponent. The free attacks you gain are generally worth the time it takes to maneuver back to the face your army originally occupied. And remember, in the case of missile and magic, you don't *have* to target the routing army.

Restore as Often as Possible: If your army holds a city, don't forget to take the one point of recruitment each turn. It may not seem like a lot, but over several turns, those points add up.

By the same token, given a choice between blasting an opponent with a spell or resurrecting one of your own casualties, I suggest doing the latter. If you continue restoring dice while your opponents are losing theirs, you'll win the war by attrition.

Winning the End Game

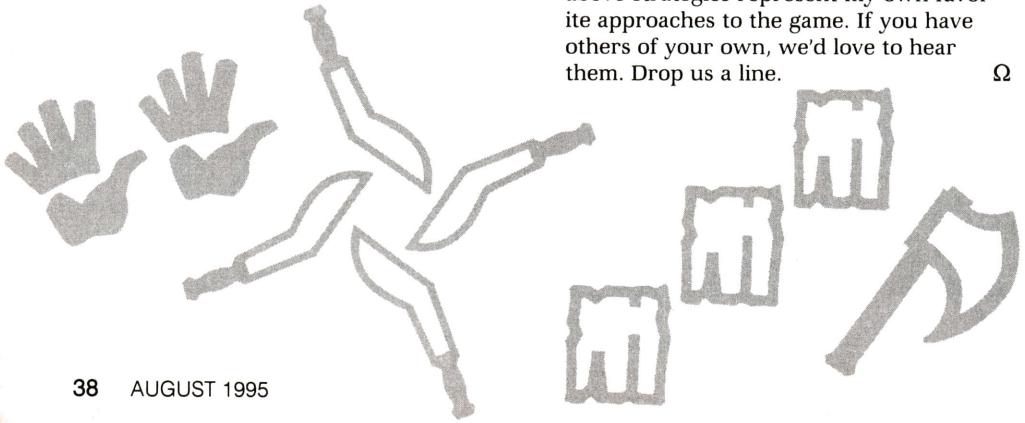
Clinching the win in a DRAGON DICE game is seldom a matter of bludgeoning your opponents into submission. Rather, it usually involves one last, desperate—or tricky—grasp at capturing a terrain.

Again, spells can be helpful, lending an army a few extra maneuver results, or robbing them from a counter-maneuvering force. Similarly, missile fire from an adjacent terrain can help, weakening enemies enough for your forces to outmaneuver them.

At this point, reserve forces can be critical. I've seen more than one game won when someone slipped one or two dice from their reserve into a terrain that earlier had been abandoned to a dragon.

Final Comments

As mentioned a few times earlier, the above strategies represent my own favorite approaches to the game. If you have others of your own, we'd love to hear them. Drop us a line. Ω



E3

Continued from page 35

comer Magnet Interactive Studios (in conjunction with Fox Home Entertainment) had *Bluestar*, an adventure game set around a human/dolphin space station. Those who'd rather kill it than talk to it needn't fear though, since Mindscape was offering *Warhammer 40,000* based on the Games Workshop game.

In the horror vein, keep your stake sharp for *Vampire: The Masquerade* from GT Interactive and *Hellraiser: Virtual Hell* from Magnet Interactive Studios (in Spring '96). Cyberdreams continues its relationship with H.R. Giger in *Dark Seed II* and Cthulhu fans will want to check out *Prisoner of Ice* by I-Motion. By the way, they're also giving *Alone in the Dark 3* a Wild West spin. Let's hope it's not Billy the Kid Meets Dracula. And promising to be truly unusual is *D*, an offering from Japan done for the 3DO. It starts with a massacre in a LA hospital and then it gets really weird . . .

Finally, there's the stuff that defies any category. That Tom Wham perennial favorite *The Awful Green Things From Outer Space* has been picked up by The Lost Souls of Tong Nou. You wake up to find your soul has gone on walkabout and you've got to get it back. And last, but hardly least, my complete favorite for lunacy, *Adventures of the Smart Patrol* by the band Devo (remember them?) and Inscape, producers of the Residents' *Freak Show*. Hey, in what other game do you get to save Spudland from the dreaded Osso-bucco Myelitis (which turns your bones to jelly) and battle the Turkey Monkey all in the same disk?

Oh, the things we can all look forward to.

David "Zeb" Cook is DRAGON Magazine's computer reviewer and a game designer for Magnet Interactive Studios. He enjoys Godzilla movies, stunt kites, and obscure HTML commands. For some reason we editors don't presume to understand, he shaved his head when he moved to Washington, D.C.

Ω

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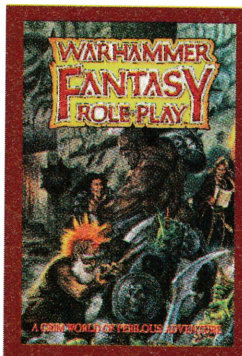

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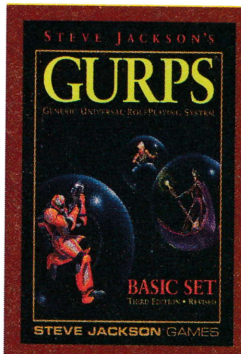

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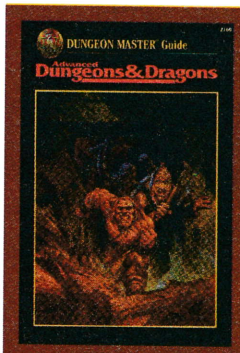

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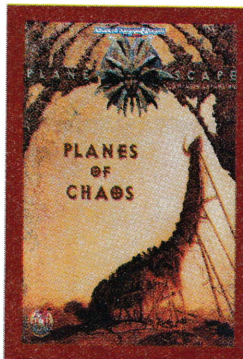

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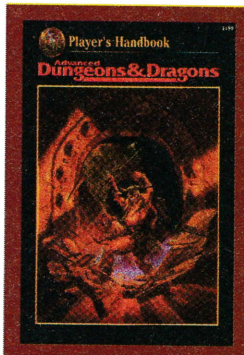

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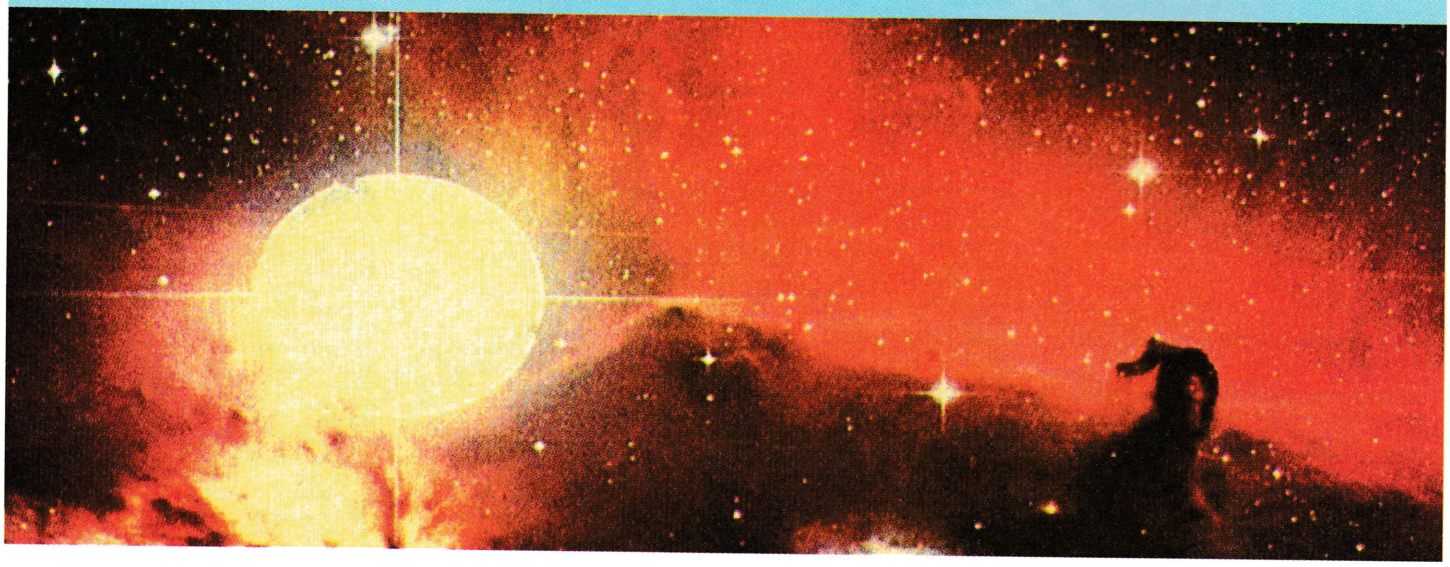

Using psionics to keep characters in line

The THOUGHT POLICE

Artwork by Jim Holloway

by Lisa Smedman

I tell you this up front—it weren't my fault, what happened in Gundersthall. I would have sprung the others if I could, but they got this militia there, the likes of which I ain't ever seen before. They know what crime you're gonna commit before you even thunk out a proper plan. That's why the others wound up nicked. 'Cuz of them militia. I tell you, Gundersthall is one city the Lightfinger Guild ought to avoid.

Start from the beginning? Well, okay. If you figure it's gonna help the guild. Just so long as it warns my brother and sister thieves about what they're in for.

We'd heard Gundersthall was a rich city. Lots of flash homes and wealthy merchants with jewellery dripping off 'em, just begging to be lifted. But that only figures, don't it? Gundersthall's in the heart of the diamond mining district.

So me, Arias, Lucky the Legbreaker, and Big Efful make our way over the mountains and down into Gundersthall. It's just as rich as they say—nobs wearing cloth of gold, and big houses with marble pillars. Everyone looks so soft we figure we'll rule this town. Tumble whoever we want, catpaw our way into the best homes, and stiff anyone who gets in our way.

But first, we want to make sure we ain't stepping into marked territory. Our first stop's a pub on the other side of the stables, so to speak, a cheap little hovel with sour ale. If there's already a guild in Gundersthall, we figure this is the place to find it. We hang around a whole week, eyeballing the locals and dropping a word or two in the cant whenever we see a likely lookin' scraw. And what do we find? Nuthin'. Not a single thief in the whole city, near as we could make out.

Arias is gettin' restless by now, and figures it's time to do a little pocket sifting. I give it the nod, 'cuz we need a little spending money. She edges out into the street and picks a likely mark. Flash lookin' fellow, probably a noble. It's going smooth and easy; her hand's in and out like a hummer. And then somethin' happens. This militia guy—and I swear his back's to her the whole time—turns around and grabs Arias' wrist like he saw the whole thing. He gives a whistle and—pop! pop! pop!—three more of the militia appear beside him.

They don't look so tough—they're only wearing leather armor and carrying dinky little swords—but Arias takes one look at 'em and falls to her knees, begging 'em not to hurt her. From the expression on her face, you'd think she was about to be crisped by a dragon. Next thing we know, Arias is marchin' off down the street, all jerky like, between those four fellows. Me, Lucky, and Efful are so surprised we don't move quick enough. By the time we get to the corner, they're gone.

We don't see Arias for a day or two. When we do, she's gone peculiar in the head. Says she can't remember how to thief no more. And it's true, sure as sin. We test her out on a simple shell game with the bartender and she muffs it straight off. Bad enough that Lucky had to cover for her, but then she goes and says she's gonna report herself to the militia, for committing a crime. Big Efful had to take a swing at her, to knock that silly idea out of her head.

An that's when our next problem starts.

Big Efful's been getting testy, these last few days, and so when one of the patrons says to lay off Arias, Efful figures on startin' a little bar room brawl. Tables and teeth start to fly, and Lucky and I sit back to watch the fun. But before Efful gets a chance to bloody her other fist, there's this pop! pop! noise again, and two of them militia fellows appear.

Now Efful's pretty big, and we're figuring these two aren't gonna last a minute. But were we ever wrong! Those two was tougher and stronger than guys their size had a right to be, and one had a arm that ended in an axe. Not one of yer screw-off hook hands, but a honest to blazes metal axe where his hand should be. Well, Efful takes one look at that and draws a sword. Next thing ya know, that sword's glowing red-hot and Efful drops it on the floor.

Efful's a real scrapper, so the sword trick don't slow her down none. She slams a fist into mister axe-hand—and swears a blue streak when his stomach turns out to be as hard as metal, too. Before she's got a chance to try somethin' else, the guy behind her blinks. Just blinks, mind you, and Efful disappears with a pop! Beats me where she went. She don't know no spells and sure as sacrilege didn't tely-port herself nowhere.

The militia guys turn and look at us. Like I say, they don't look so tough, but what they said sent us back a step.

"We've been watching you," they says, "through the eyes of your friend, here. Everything Arias sees, we see. Everything she hears, we hear. Try to steal anything—or try that shell game on another bartender—and you'll be under arrest before your hand reaches your pocket."

Then pop! pop! and they're gone too.

The folks in the bar is lookin' sideways and surly at us, so we lit out fast. In all the confusion, seems we lost Arias. Probably went to turn herself in to the militia, after all. And good riddance, since she's become a ratter for them. If I were you, I'd toss her out of the guild.

How did I lose Lucky? Well I'm comin' to it.

You know how Lucky is. He'd as soon kill a man as steal from him. I only meant for him to do a simple smash-and-grab job, but he got carried away again. 'Stead of just knocking the shopkeeper out, Lucky stiffed him. Left his knife behind, too. We went back for it, but the shop was crawling with militia by the time we got there. Still, I figured we was safe, since nobody in this town would recognize Lucky's knife.

We watched from the alley out back, to make sure things was smooth. But it weren't. Don't it figure, but them militia guys cast some sort of magic over the knife. One of the fellows picked it up, closed his eyes, and without even makin' a gesture or babbling them funny words that wizards like to use he starts talkin' to the knife like it's alive. I dunno how it did it, but that knife told him Lucky's name and age, just like that. It even knew that Lucky was one-eighth ogre—something even I didn't know about him before.

We legged it away down the alley, but there was one of them militia guys blocking the way. I drew my knife, thinkin' to sidle around behind him and pat his back while Lucky kept his attention. But next thing I know, Lucky's down on the ground crying—actual tears, for sanity's sake—and sayin' over and over that he's a worthless criminal scum.

I'm so busy gaping at Lucky I don't see the punches coming. But they hit, hard, and my arm goes numb. I look up, and there's three more militia fellows standing beside the first. And none of 'em close enough to have punched me.

They questioned us on the spot about the murder—I guess the folks in Gundersthall don't believe in trials. Trooper he is, Lucky lied beautifully, once he got his composure back. But them militia guys could tell, every time Lucky flipped them a fable. And then one of 'em looks Lucky dead in the eye and says a single word: "Guilty."

The others give this grim nod, and I'm wonderin' what'll come next. I kinda get a hunch when they tell me to take a step to the side. I expected maybe they'd give Lucky a bruisin' and tell him to heave on away from Gundersthall, but that wasn't their style, oh no. They just stand there and look at him. After a second or two, Lucky goes all white and funny looking, and then he disappears. Well, most of him, anyway. All that's left is a pair of feet, leakin' a little red.

I'm thinkin' it's an illusion, and still feeling pretty cocky. But then one of the militia guys looks into my eyes and, in a creepy kinda way says, "It's no illusion. Your friend has been executed for the crime of murder. I suggest you leave Gundersthall, before you wind up committing a capital offence, as well."

I'm ashamed to say it, but I turned and ran. Them fellows was just too weird for me. I was gonna leave town right there and then. But when I slowed down to catch my breath, my eye lit on one of them fancy homes. Whoever lived there had left the door open a crack. And that's an even better invitation than an unfastened lock. 'Specially when I could see the glint of silverware on a table just inside the door.

I looked over my shoulder for the militia, but didn't see any. I was gonna leave town that night, but figured Gundersthall owed me a little something, just to pay my way back home again. 'Specially after the way it treated my crew. So I slipped on over to the door and eased it open.

The silverware's just inside, and as my hand closes on it, I smile. I'm as good as wealthy. Then a voice whispers softly in my ear. "Aren't you worried that theft might be a capital offence?" it asks.

I hate to say it, but I screamed. And I dropped that silverware on the ground. It made a clatter that must have been heard for blocks. But when I look around, there's no one there. No one at all.

I gotta tell you, I was spooked. Not only were those militia guys able to dissintegrate a man where he stood, but they were invisible too. If they went for me, I'd never even see it coming.

So that's how it happened that I left Gundersthall without a copper in my pocket. It was a tough go on the road back. I wasn't sure how far them militia patrolled, and I was afraid even to steal an apple from a tree. Along the way, I thought of going back for Efful or Arias, but figured it weren't worth it.

So that's my report. And if the Lightfinger Guild knows what's good for it, they won't try no thievin' in Gundersthall ever again.

In the typical AD&D® campaign, the militia that serve as the police force of a town or city are simple fighters, perhaps armed with magical weapons and armor. They're usually little more than cannon fodder for high-level player characters with a variety of spells and magical items at their disposal. There is little to make the life of a thief difficult—or to dissuade characters of chaotic alignment from running amok in town, injuring or killing whomever they please. The DM can always throw ever-increasing numbers of militia members in their way, but the PCs are likely only to kill them and take the magical goodies they were carrying.

Spellcasters are an option, but the lower hit points of wizards make them poor candidates for the militia. And both they and clerics face a common problem—spells that take several rounds to cast.

In contrast, the psionicist offers several advantages as a militia member. Most psionic abilities require no preparation time—they take effect instantaneously. In addition, the use of psionics does not require gestures, spell books, special vocalizations, or material components, making psionics an "invisible" art.

Psionic abilities can be used by a militia member while patrolling the streets, as an aid in arresting criminals, to question suspects, to investigate crime scenes, to spy upon known criminals—even to rehabilitate convicted felons.

Psionics on the beat

A psionicist militia member on patrol has a number of abilities that make the job of policing a town easier. For simple observation of suspicious characters, there's the All-Round Vision ability, which allows the member to watch with his or her back turned. A member trying to locate a suspect who is hiding might use Life Detection, while Spirit Sense and Psionic Sense can help a member who is on the trail of a ghostly spirit or a fellow psionicist.

Danger Sense protects the militia member while he is on patrol, while Teleport

Trigger can instantly return the member to headquarters if he is wounded (reduced to a certain number of hit points) or knocked unconscious.

Militia members can use their psionic abilities to stay in touch, much as real-world police officers use a radio system. Mindlink is the most reliable ability, since it provides two-way communication over an unlimited distance, but Send Thoughts or Psychic Messenger can also be used by a militia member wanting to make a report.

When a crime is spotted and additional militia members are required, either to make an arrest or to help control a violent situation, members can arrive on the scene instantly by using the Teleport ability. Dimensional Door is somewhat less useful, since it causes temporary disorientation and since it has a maximum range of 50 yards. Dimension Walk is a good alternative for shorter distances; traveling one mile or less takes just under 30 seconds. For longer journeys (to apprehend a suspect who has fled to another city, for example) the psionicist militia member can use Probability Travel to make the arrest.

Keeping the peace

Typical psionicist militia members are armed with short swords, spears, hand axes, short bows, warhammers, or light crossbows. Some carry a small shield. If more muscle is required, the psionicist might also be a fighter—either a dual-class human, or a multi-class halfling or dwarf.

The psionicist militia member has many abilities that can help when facing a violent criminal. While a psionicist is limited to leather armor (other types reduce the psionic power score), the ability Flesh Armor can be used to improve the militia member's armor class until it is the equivalent of plate mail. An Inertial Barrier can protect against everything from missiles to acid, while Displacement creates a false image that provides an armor class bonus.

The psionicist can use Enhanced Strength or Adrenalin Control to boost his abilities, and can use Combat Mind to anticipate an opponent's fighting tactics and thus gain an advantage.

The Graft Weapon ability also provides an advantage, and if the militia member is disarmed, Body Weaponry can convert a limb into a replacement weapon, or Ballistic Attack can turn a small, hurled object into a deadly missile.

The psionicist militia member need not resort to weapons at all. He can use the Detonate ability to explode weapons from a distance of 60 yards, and he can Disintegrate an item or creature at 50 yards. Project Force can deliver a body punch up to 200 yards distant.

The psionicist can use Molecular Agitation to make a metal weapon too hot to hold, or to cause the clothing of an opponent to burst into flame. Molecular manipulation and Soften can be used to create flaws in the weapons of opponents or to weaken metal armor to the point of uselessness.

Making an arrest

The psionic militia member does not need to rely on the authority of his office to instill obedience. Thieves and other lawbreakers who normally thumb their noses at authority can be brought into line using a variety of psionic abilities. Awe can be used to intimidate a suspect mentally, while Invincible Foes can convince a lawbreaker that the militia member is unbeatable. Ego Whip can leave a suspect feeling worthless and inferior, prompting the lawbreaker to surrender.

Once a suspect is taken into custody, the psionicist can seize the lawbreaker and teleport him to prison, or the psionicist can Teleport Other if the suspect is unconscious or willing to surrender. Criminals who refuse to surrender may be dealt with by means of the Control Body ability, which allows the psionicist to move them about like puppets. Domination and Mass Domination can also force lawbreakers do as the militia member wishes.

Especially tough lawbreakers can be dealt with using the Banishment ability, which allows the psionicist to teleport the character to a pocket dimension and hold him there for as long as the psionicist maintains the ability. The only lawbreakers who might escape this form of "solitary confinement" are those with access to the astral or ethereal planes, or those who can teleport between planes.

Questioning suspects

When trying to determine the guilt or innocence of a suspect, the psionic militia member has several advantages over real-world police officers. A number of psionic abilities can be used to establish guilt—or innocence.

By using Aura Sight, a militia member can determine a suspect's alignment. While this is not necessarily proof of evil doing, it can demonstrate a tendency toward lawbreaking or violence. During the questioning period, the militia member can use Truthear as a psionic lie detector, or can use ESP to directly read the thoughts of a suspect. Even Empathy has its uses in determining a suspect's emotional reaction to a crime.

Some of these abilities can also prevent crime. By using ESP to read the thoughts of a suspicious character, a militia member can learn that a crime is about to be committed and step in to prevent it.

When questioning suspects, Probe can dig deep into a character's subconscious to unearth memories that the suspect is not consciously thinking about. If the militia members are of an evil alignment, Inflict Pain can torture the truth out of a suspect.

If a lawbreaker is in disguise or trying to hide his identity with illusion or polymorphing spells, Identity Penetration can reveal the truth.

Finally, if the militia includes at least three psionicists of 7th level or higher, Retrospection can glean free-floating memories from the past—even memories originally created by witnesses who have long since died.

In areas patrolled by a psionic militia, certain magical items are banned outright, since they prevent militia members from doing their jobs. Banned items include the *ring of mind shielding*, which makes its wearer immune to ESP, Lie Detection, and psionic abilities that can determine alignment, and the *amulet of proof against detection and location*, which protects against Clairaudience, Clairvoyance, ESP, and other scrying attempts. Sometimes, these items are used by militia who are doing undercover work, in an effort to shield their true identities.

Surveillance

If a psionic militia member suspects that a citizen is planning a crime or is about to break the law, he can monitor that suspect using ones of a number of different psionic abilities. With either Clairaudience or Sound Link, the militiaman can eavesdrop on incriminating conversations. Clairvoyance and Sight Link can help the militiaman observe criminal activities as they are taking place, allowing the militia member to serve as an eyewitness against the criminals involved.

For undercover surveillance work, the militia member can use Metamorphosis to change into an object or animal or can observe unnoticed using Invisibility or Superior Invisibility. Observation can also be conducted unobtrusively using Shadowform or Chameleon Power.

At the scene of a crime

In the real world, much of the work done by police involves piecing together clues after a crime has been committed. In a fantasy world, a crime scene can yield clues that a only psionic militia member can analyze, using his unique talents.

By means of the Object Reading ability, a militia member can determine the race, sex, age, and alignment of the person who last "owned" the object. This loose term also includes thieves—even though their lawful ownership of an object might be subject to dispute. This ability can also provide the psionicist with information on how the last owner gained the object (perhaps through illegal means) and lost it. Object Reading can be especially useful when applied to a murder weapon.

The militia member can survey the crime scene itself with the Sensitivity to Psychic Impressions ability. This reveals residues of powerful emotions to the psionicist—emotions that may help determine if a death was accidental, leaving little emotional residue, or a murder, leaving a strong residue of hatred or fear.

Finally, Poison Sense can determine whether a person who was found dead was poisoned. Unfortunately, only good investigative work can reveal the details of the poison used; the ability only reveals the presence of poison, not its type, user, intended target, or source.

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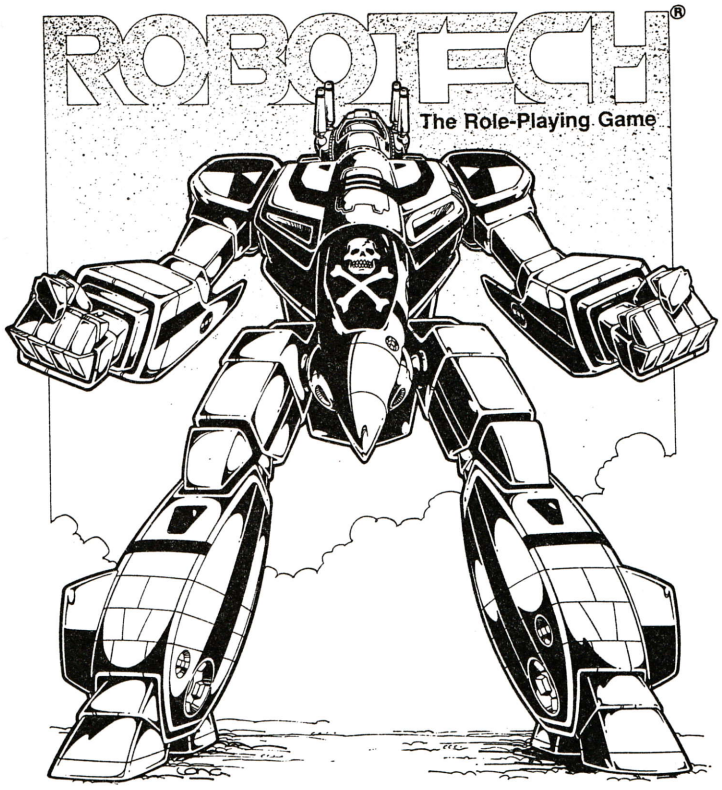

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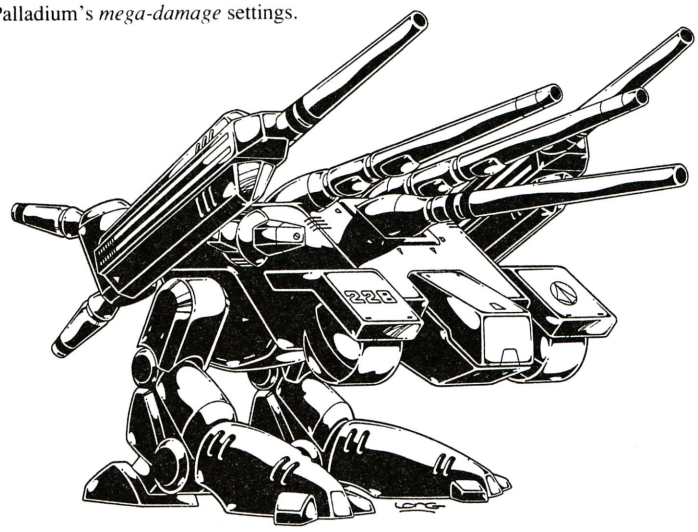

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Criminal rehabilitation

In cities with a psionic militia, not just crime investigation but also criminal rehabilitation can employ psionic abilities. In passing sentence on an offender, a judge might use Empathy to determine how a suspect feels about his crime. Those who display no remorse may receive stiffer sentences.

Other psionic abilities can be used to rehabilitate the lawbreaker. A post-hypnotic suggestion might, in future, compel a criminal to turn himself in to the militia if subsequent crimes are committed. The Mindwipe ability offers more drastic measure of dealing with lawbreakers, particularly with repeat offenders. By using this ability, the psionicist can seal off portions of the criminal's mind, limiting access to learned skills—particularly those skills associated with thieving. (In terms of game mechanics, the character's experience level is lowered, reducing his thieving skill scores.) In the process, the criminal's Intelligence and Wisdom are lowered, but in some places this might be considered a small price to pay for the rehabilitation of a criminal. Best of all, these changes are permanent and can be reversed only via Psychic Surgery.

Magical items for the militia

In campaigns where psionics are severely restricted or are absent altogether, a number of magical items can duplicate the psionic abilities described above. The drawback is that these portable items can fall into the hands of lawbreakers and thus could be used against the forces of law they were designed to serve.

These magical items include: *crystal ball, helm of telepathy, medallion of ESP,* potion of *human control,* potion of *invisibility, ring of chameleon power, ring of human influence, ring of invisibility, ring of truth, ring of X-ray vision, robe of blending.*

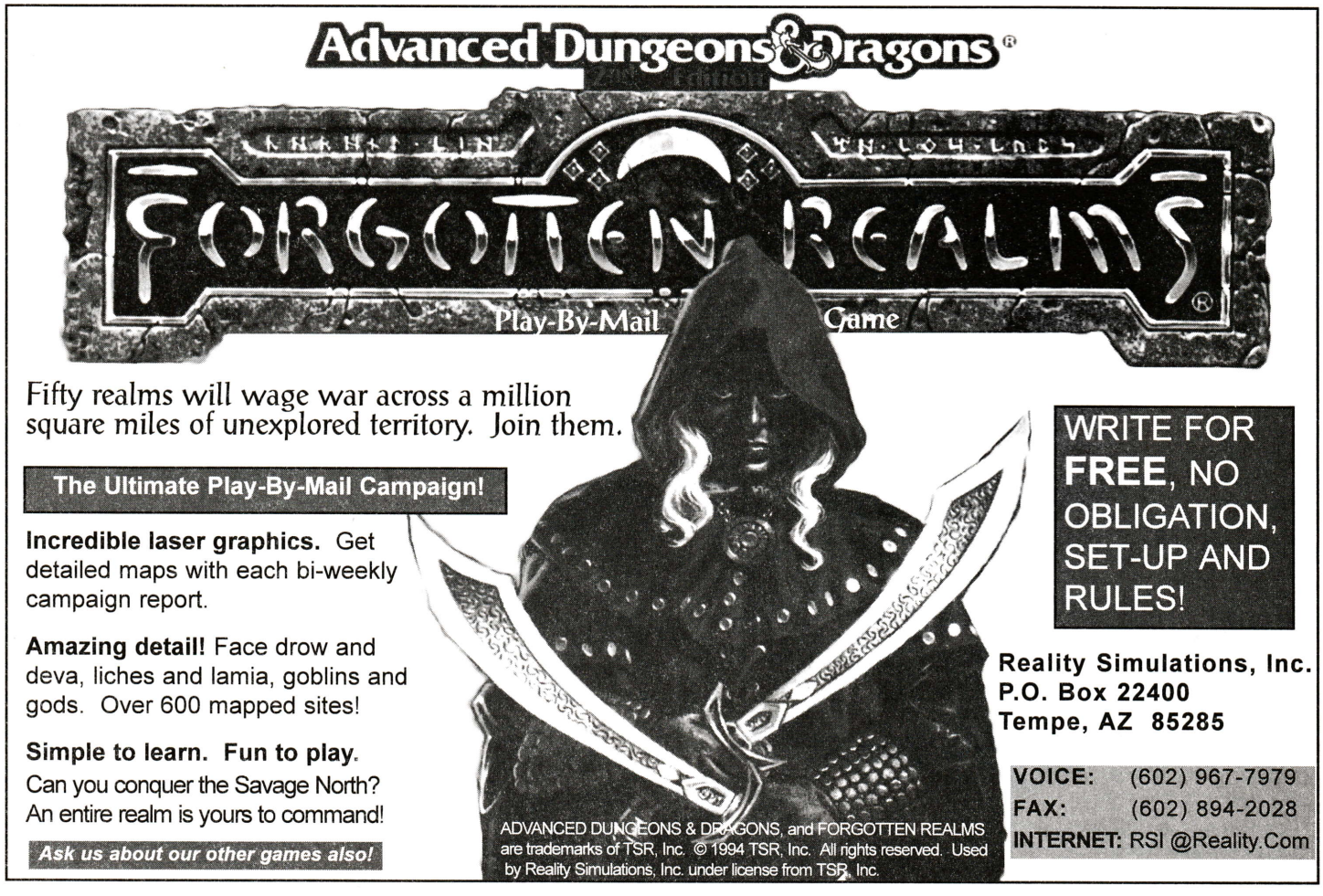
Adventure ideas

While psionicists are prohibited from being of chaotic alignment, they may be either good or evil. Thus a city patrolled by a psionic militia may be a safe, secure place where citizens don't bother to lock their doors and where violent crime is almost unheard of. Or it may be a fantasy version of *1984,* in which "thought police" intimidate the citizenry, who are terrified of being arrested for thinking "illegal thoughts." The PCs may thus find themselves either supporting the local militia or working actively to overthrow it. In either case, PC thieves will certainly get more than they bargained for.

Here are two ideas for adventures that hinge upon a psionic militia:

- A thieves' guild (possibly one that was previously banished from the town) plans to gain new territory. But first, they must eliminate the psionicists who serve as the town's militia. They plan to use cerebral parasites or brain moles to do the job. The PCs are involved either because the thieves test the creatures on a psionic party member or because they are hired by the thieves to capture and distribute these creatures. The PCs may or may not realize the true purpose of the capture-and-release program until it is too late.
- A psionic militia is being set up in the PCs' city. Word goes out that the militia is hiring, and the PCs apply. Part of the application process involves testing each candidate for psionic wild talents. These latent abilities can only be awakened by a psionicist skilled in Psychic Surgery. In the process, one of the PCs is accidentally Fate Linked with another applicant. The applicant later commits a horrendous murder and is pursued by the militia. If caught, he will be executed. The Fate Link can be reversed, but unfortunately there aren't any psionicists currently available to do the job. The PCs are forced (temporarily) to find and protect this violent criminal, for if the criminal dies, so will their companion.

Ω



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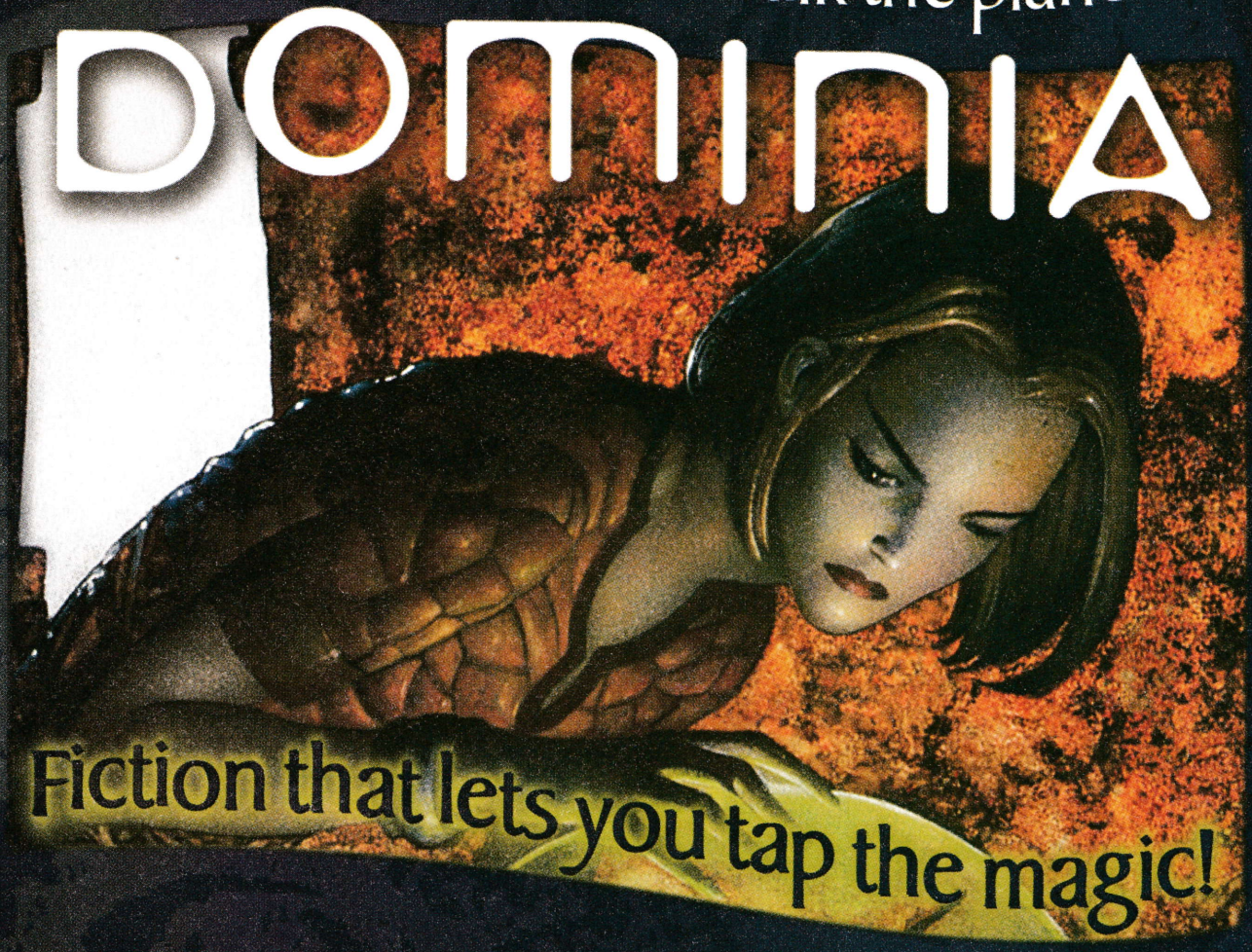

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ROLE-PLAYING reviews

Disturbing Visions

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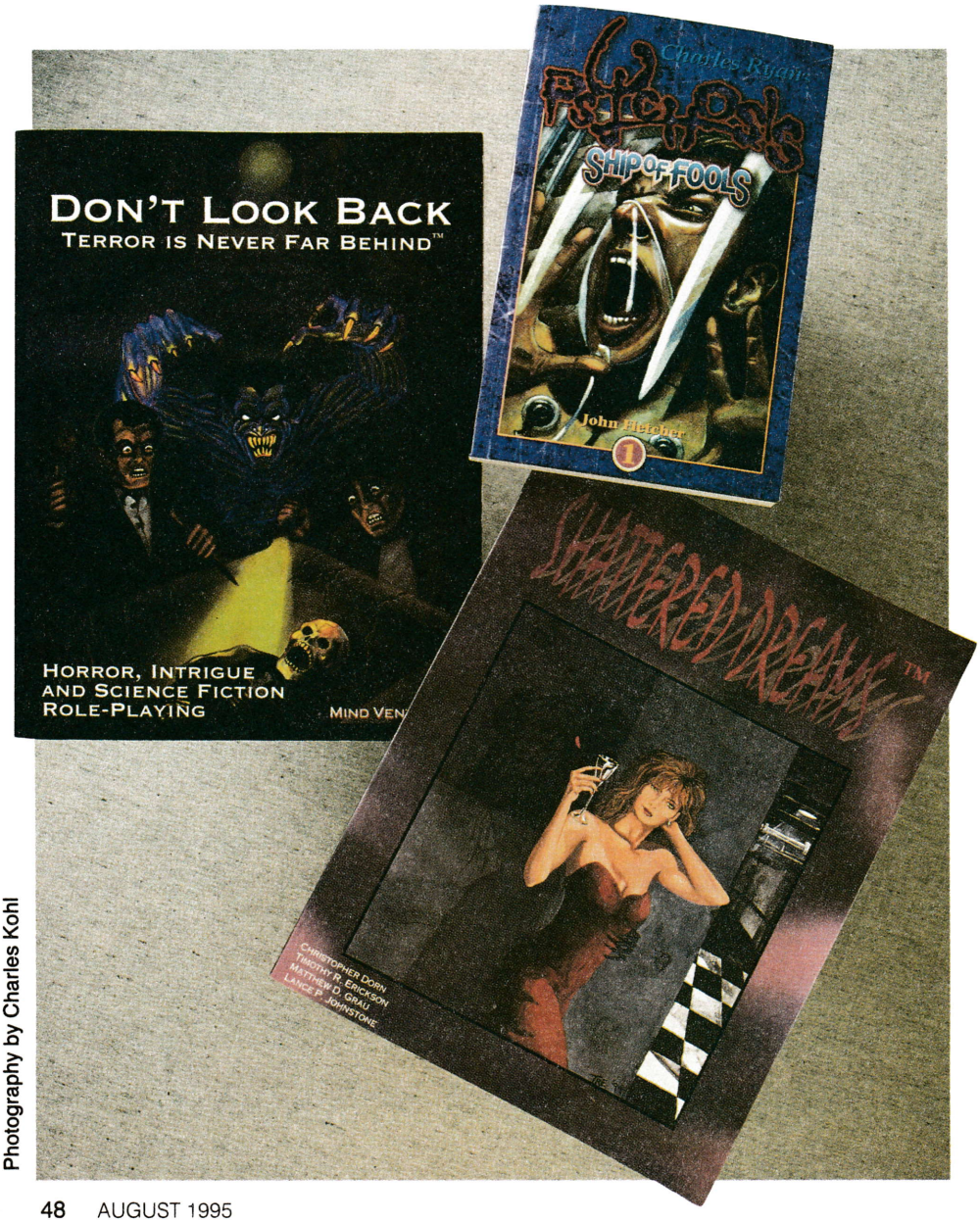

Photography by Charles Kohl

In order to indulge myself in a bit of theorizing and a few asides within the reviews that follow, I'm cutting this introduction short. As a matter of fact, it's over now.

Don't Look Back: Terror Is Never Far Behind* game

8 1/2″ × 11″, 158-page
Mind Ventures $19.00
PO Box 1032
Starkville, MS 39759
Design: Chuck McGrew
Creative Consultant: Mark Taylor
Editing: J. A. McGrew
Art: Chuck Waite

There are two major approaches to designing a horror game setting. One is to choose a single central theme—such as the Cthulhu mythos (as in the classic *Call of Cthulhu** game), or PCs as vampires (as in the popular *Vampire: The Masquerade** game), or PCs as otherworldly entities (as in the excellent *Whispering Vault** game), to name a few. The other is to run the gamut of horror, from ghost story to slasher flick to apocalyptic threat (as in the old *Chill** or *Bureau 13: Stalking the Night Fantastic** games, or my own *Dark Conspiracy** game).

Each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses. Choosing a central theme gives a game immediate unity, but also restricts it. It focuses on one audience at the expense of all others. If that central theme is strong enough (as is certainly the case in the games mentioned above), then the focus audience will be big, and adventure campaigns will be long-standing. But it still won't allow for some types of stories. Designing a game to run the gamut of horror, on the other hand, allows for any type of story, which means that the game master can import plots from any book or movie. But it begs the question as to why the PCs keep getting involved. Typically, the designers invent some sort of secret society of which the PCs are a part. If done well, that answer not only provides the link between separate adventures, it also can *become* another source of fear for the PCs, if there is a hint of possible corruption in the organization itself, and if they come to suspect that they are being used as pawns in a deadly game played by their contacts.

Role-playing games' ratings

- Not recommended
- Poor, but may be useful
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent
- The best

The *Don't Look Back: Terror is Never Far Behind* game (henceforth referred to as DLB) takes this second approach to horror. It posits a modern world (as do most horror games) in which a limitless number of supernatural events are possible, without any necessary link among them. And it suggests that PCs are recruits of a secret government agency intended to investigate such things. Their agency isn't the only such "black" (i.e. clandestine) organization, however; there are several others, with sometimes conflicting agendas, a fact which heightens PC paranoia. But that is only the icing: The cake is the supernatural itself, from people with paranormal abilities to traditional horror monsters.

In terms of design, DLB demonstrates its producers' respectable understanding of role-playing in general, the horror genre in particular, and the importance of good game mechanics.

Consider the two sample adventures, for instance. The first is a straightforward exploration of a haunted house, the second involves the PCs in an investigation of a series of strange murders. Without giving anything away, let me just say that these adventures are perfect examples of the strength of simple plots in role-playing sessions. PCs have a way of complicating adventures with their own actions, and they typically miss at least some of the clues available. All too often, designers layer so much complexity into their adventures—weaving this NPC's actions with that one's with yet another's—that players never really figure out what is going on. Some of the best adventures have just one major NPC with a central goal and a basic timeline of events; the GM compares the PCs' actions to that timeline, letting the players know what happens as a result. The first adventure in DLB demonstrates how much fun can result from one simple setting, and the second adventure shows how to take a single central concept and expand it into multiple events.

In their mystery, setting, and timing, the sample adventures also demonstrate an awareness of what it takes to convey horror. The players have enough conflicting clues to keep them guessing about what is going on, which makes their fright all the more dramatic when their characters actually confront the supernatural. And the game itself furthers this sort of mystery by providing a framework for designing supernatural beings, rather than simply listing them, which means that every new encounter remains a mystery. In other words, the GM is not limited to a list of stock creatures, but instead is given the means to easily translate any monster to game mechanics.

But before describing game mechanics, allow me an aside.

At the dawn of role-playing, people discovered that, by focusing on one character in a miniatures campaign, they could imagine the action through that character's eyes, and it was a rush. As designers explored the possibilities of this, they added more and more rules to drive stories farther and farther beyond the miniatures table. It was an age when the *Chivalry and Sorcery** game was the holy grail of "realistic combat." But over time, people noticed that looking up the finer points of encyclopedic rules got in the way of the unfolding story itself. So a new breed of designers arose to create games in which rules were sneered at, and the story became paramount. Unfortunately, as a result, game masters found themselves making up action results "whole cloth." Some became despots—disaffecting their players, who felt their characters no longer had any control over events—and others were bullied into letting their players' characters run rough-shod over their world, and they threw up their hands in despair. The new designers responded by creating more and more story supplements—books filled with NPCs, their webs of plots, and their special powers—ironically returning gamers to the frustration of poring over encyclopedic references. As a result, collectible card games took over the hobby, providing both solid rules and the rush of role-playing-like action.

It COULD happen.

The best role-playing games provide both an exciting milieu in which to adventure and an elegant set of mechanics to define characters and actions, mechanics that become transparent during play. DLB is one of those games. The world it presents allows for any sort of horror story, while remaining internally consistent. Its mechanics are flexible enough to cover any event within the genre, and simple enough to fade from sight during play, yet solid enough to satisfy both GM and players.

In an impressively inventive way, the game mechanics revolve around the roll of multiple six-sided dice, centering on either the best or the worst three dice of a roll. Every numerical value in the game is defined as either a modifier to the number of dice rolled or a multiplier to the result. Character attributes (FITNESS, DEXTERITY, INTELLIGENCE, PERCEPTION, WILL, and SOCIAL), skill ratings (each character has a half dozen or so), equipment bonuses to skills, and difficulty ratings are all additive modifiers, typically ranging from +5 to −5, with 0 being exactly average. Players always roll at least 3d6, adding however many dice are called for by the accumulated modifiers. For example, a character with a FIT of −1 (just below average) and a Climbing skill of +5 (well above average), trying to scale a wall with a difficulty rating of −2, would have a net modifier of +2 (−1+5−2). So the player would roll 5d6 (the basic three, plus two for the total modifier). Because the modifier's value is positive, the player would take the *best* three dice of that roll. On the other hand, a character with a FIT of +1 and a Climbing skill of 0, scaling the same wall, would have a net modifier of −1 (+1+0−2). So the player would roll 4d6 (the basic three, and one more for the total modifier). Because the modifier's value is negative, the player would take the *worst* three dice of that roll.

A roll result of 11 to 18 always means success, but the higher the result, the better the success. A roll of 3 to 10 always means failure, and the lower the result, the worse the failure. In the case of an attack roll, for instance, a roll of 18 inflicts more damage than an 11, and a roll of 3 might mean the attacker accidentally hits a friend, while a roll of 10 simply means the target was missed. Damage is determined by subtracting 10 from a successful roll (11 becomes 1 point, 12 becomes 2, . . . 18 becomes 8), then multiplying by the weapon's damage multiplier and any resistance modifier of the target. Deciding both success and damage with one roll keeps action quick (and avoids the incongruity of games in which a perfect attack roll might match up with an awful damage roll), assuming players can handle the multipliers easily. Unfortunately, some people will be daunted by DLB's decimal multipliers, and math anxiety can rip the heart right out of a role-playing session. I think the game's producers would have been better off using whole numbers and just increasing characters' health ratings by a factor of ten. The end result would be the same, with slightly less seeming complexity.

There are a few other weaknesses to the product. The foremost is its poor visual impact. In a market increasingly driven by kick-butt graphics, DLB falls short. Its illustrations are not awful, but they are nowhere near elegant. Most severe is their lack of enough contrast of light and dark, but physical proportions and poses are a problem as well. As a result, the first impression of the product is that it must be sophomoric. The other graphic elements (type face, page layout, etc.) are clear but workmanlike.

Textually, the book is arranged well, with basic information such as character generation and dice mechanics first, followed by GM information, and including an index. The writing is clear and reasonably entertaining, though a bit unevenly edited. The English errors are not glaring, but they do give the text an amateurish feel. One thing I find particularly ironic involves the producers' stance on "he" as a generic pronoun. In their list of "Terms and Conventions," the writer and editor state that they use the masculine form as a generic pronoun because "We choose to be grammatically correct instead of politically correct." Yet their very next use of "he" is, technically, grammatically incorrect! Sure, it's a futzy point that prevents a pronoun from referring to a possessive adjective.

But even after that instance, they typically use "they" as a singular pronoun, instead of "he." Why make such a blatantly political statement, if they are not prepared to follow up on it?

But notwithstanding its less-than-adequate art and editing, I'm impressed with DLB overall. In running the game, I found character generation quick and simple, action resolution was easy to adjudicate, and the adventures were truly spooky. The price is reasonable by comparison. Five pips may be a bit more than the game deserves, but four would be too few. Overall, this is an applaudable first product by a new company, and I look forward to seeing more from Mind Ventures.

Shattered Dreams* game

8 1/2" × 11", 144-page book
Apex Publications, Inc.
PO Box 20405, Bloomington,
MN 55420-0405 $18.00
Design: Matthew D. Grau, Timothy R. Erickson, with Christopher M. Dorn, David J. Karon, and Lance P. Johnstone
Editing: Matthew D. Grau
Art: Timothy R. Erickson

As a horror RPG fan, I really wanted the SHATTERED DREAMS* game to work. It's an interesting-looking product with an unusual premise, one that (to the best of my knowledge) has never been fully explored before in a role-playing game. In this game, players take the role of "dreamwalkers," individuals able to travel the collective unconscious of humanity's dreams. However, all too many of those dreams are plagued by evil creatures of various sorts who dwell within the dream realm. Just as humanity has sprung forth from the physical world, these beings arise from the world of the sleeping mind. For anyone who has ever had a nightmare—and who hasn't?—this makes for a darkly eerie role-playing setting. In the dream state, we are most vulnerable. Our darkest inner secrets and most private feelings, things we hide even from ourselves, are laid bare. The game plays on this unsettling premise and adds sinister creatures who lurk at the edge of perception, preying on our suffering. But as dreamwalkers, the PCs have some conscious control of the visions they visit, which empowers them in an exciting way.

Overall, the game book's presentation works well to convey that setting. The art is darkly dreamlike, with an edge and inventiveness that avoids triteness. Some viewers might consider it a bit childish, but it works for me. Graphically, the book has a good impact. For one thing, lots of art breaks up the text. For another, the text itself is laid out clearly in general, with fonts that give a slightly scrawled look to the chapter titles and interior headings. In terms of writing, the text is an easy read, with some exciting descriptions and dream powers, and a few solidly mood-provoking narrative sections. Readers should be warned that there is a slight salting of mature art and language in the product. But dreams have their erotic side, as well, hence the legendary succubus in literature.

The game's editing is erratic, however, with lots of sentence-level errors. With the fonts available to the producers, I'm sure their editing program must have had an electronic spell-checker available, but it's obvious that they didn't use it. Of course, it's common for small-press games to have poor editing, and even large publishers put out a rough bit of text now and again.

Where the SHATTERED DREAMS game really starts to fall apart is in its mechanics. On the one hand, it suffers from a number of subtle mistakes common to first-time designers and small-press publishers. For example, given that the game seeks to portray a dream world prone to sudden shifts and rapid action, there are far too many attributes and skills on the character sheet, and their values have to be translated to something else entirely before any dice can be rolled. (More about this in a moment.) Also, while it's a pretty cool idea to resolve actions by rolling 1d12 for the skill used and another for the related attribute, then comparing their individual success or failure to determine an overall degree of overall success or failure, I don't think the designers realize that their particular take on that mechanic makes attributes paramount and skills minimally important. (In their system, success with both is great success; failure with both is great failure; success with the attribute alone is marginal success; success with the skill alone is marginal failure; and great success or failure calls for a second roll of the attribute die for astonishing success or failure.) But, again, these are relatively subtle errors, in keeping with the hobby's current widespread disdain for the mechanical side of role-playing games. Even taken together with a few more such frailties (5d6 + 40 does not give a range of 40 to 74, for instance), they weaken the game, but don't kill it.

More blatantly flawed is the fact that, when translating attributes and skills to success numbers, you don't get a *range* of success on 1d12—instead you get to choose a *set* of individual numbers. If you have a score of 4, for instance, that translates to five success numbers, and you could choose them to be 1, 6, 7, 10, and 12, or 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, or any other such combination. This doesn't actually change your chance of success, it just gives you a finicky, dice-addict thing to "customize" your character sheet. For a game that claims to avoid "a lot of dice rolling and writing," this senselessly nit-picky rule sure forces the player to reference the character sheet a lot. I have a hard time believing that anyone would think this was a good idea, especially after actually playing through a session.

But from my group's playtesting, where the game really falls apart is in its ultimate banality. While the basic idea is exciting, my playtesters complained that they felt like they were in a TV movie, that there were no real surprises. It seems as if in filling out the game and adventures, the designers just jotted down the first thing that came to their minds, trusting that the core idea would carry them over any lack of substance and polish.

In summation, then, if genius begins with 10% inspiration and then requires 90% perspiration, the SHATTERED DREAMS game's designers went about 20% of the way and stopped. I had certainly hoped for more. It had me excited. Maybe I should have taken the title more literally.

On the other hand, I hope the company produces a second edition of the game, with a bit more attention to detail. The core idea is simply too cool to let die.

Psychosis: Ship of Fools* game

5 1/2" × 8 1/2", 168-page book
Chameleon Eclectic $15.00
P.O. Box 10262, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0262
Design: John Fletcher with Charles Ryan
System Design: Charles Ryan with John Fletcher
Editing: Charles Ryan
Art: Craig Maher

I received this game as a review copy; otherwise the price might have scared me away, despite the book's sharp appearance. On the other hand, the back copy promises that the book contains an entire role-playing system, plus a campaign of six to eight sessions for four to seven players. Add to that a glitzy cover design and painting, an impressively laid out interior, more back copy that describes the PCs as not being able to trust their perceptions, or even their own names, and the fact that the system plays from a deck of Tarot cards, and I'm immediately intrigued.

Like most reviewers, I receive more products than I can conceivably keep up with. Consequently, my practice is to glance through everything, looking for the most interesting concepts or the most useful ideas. Those go to the top of the stack, to be played and then reviewed as time allows. And even just considering the most interesting and useful things, there are still too many products to cover. (Which is, I suppose, a good thing to say about the hobby. Consider the alternative.) But even by this system, the *Psychosis: Ship of Fools* book stands out. I began reading through it one Saturday afternoon, and by the time I finished an hour later, I was so desperate to give it a try that I started calling friends and begging them to play that very evening.

The premise of the *Psychosis* role-playing system is that PCs begin each campaign uncertain of who, or even what, they are. As a matter of fact, each PC begins in a completely different "reality"

from the others. As the game progresses, then, the players try to figure out what is really going on around their characters, and how the PCs relate to that situation. Because they begin in an obviously dangerous situation, the PCs must be careful in their exploration, uncertain of the real effects of their perceived actions. The game system supports this well, providing the PCs with attributes that can change at a moment's notice, and setting them up to switch from one perceived reality to another just as quickly.

Each player is dealt a hand of five Tarot cards with which to conduct actions. The coins suit represents intuition; cups represent knowledge; swords represent agility; and staves represent strength. The arcana—which represent special events particular to each campaign book—are not dealt out, but are set aside, to be drawn whenever an ace comes up in the normal deck. When their characters are attempting an action, players lay out appropriate cards from their hands, seeking a total that equals or exceeds the difficulty rating of that action. Each action is assigned a particular trump suit—breaking down a door would be a staves action, for instance—and a player who can play trump can also play additional cards of any suit but the opposing one. (Staves and cups are opposed, as are rods and coins.) Further, players can play one of each suit in front of them to form a "trace." These cards serve somewhat as character attributes. They can count toward an action attempt without being discarded, but they cannot be replaced voluntarily (if a player later draws a higher card of that suit). A player's cards also serve as "hit points" of a sort. As PCs take damage, cards are turned face down temporarily, or even removed, leaving the player with fewer to choose from for actions. This system works pretty well overall, though it can result in great inequities among the PCs, and it cycles through the deck awfully quickly. (I had one character with near maximum stats in every suit, for instance, and another who spent most of the game severely handicapped by wounds, and we went through the deck about four times in two sessions of play.)

Without any need to generate PCs more fully, play starts quickly. The GM begins with one player, describing the world his character sees, then moves on to the next player, and so on around the group. The "Guide's Action Card" provides a summary of the system and a way to track each character's current psychosis and current location in relation to the central plot. As the game unfolds, PCs can meet one another (sometimes without realizing it), convey their psychoses to one another, and eventually band together to accomplish their common goal.

Running the game is a lot of work for the GM. Even with the reference card (which isn't as helpful as intended, because it lacks scene names on the scene side and has an unnecessarily complicated psychosis wheel on the other), it can be difficult to remember who is where and how they perceive things. And perhaps most difficult is the task of keeping all the players interested, considering that you can deal with them only one at a time through much of the adventure. What's more, the GM is expected to hurry along PCs who are lagging behind in the plot, to gather everyone together by the end of things. This means that near the end of the game, the laggards need more time and attention than the others.

Still, the game is a lot of fun to play, especially as the players begin to figure out what is happening. Suddenly, earlier events begin to make sense, and they realize the gaffes their characters have performed, the ludicrous things those characters have said and done. Without giving away any secrets of the *Ship of Fools* campaign, let me just say that my players had a blast as they began realizing just how mentally screwed up their characters appeared to those around them. And the central plot is straightforward enough that I soon abandoned the record spaces on the "Guide's Action Card" and just used it as a book mark and combat

result reference.

I recommend playing the game with no more than four players, and using at least three bookmarks: one to indicate roughly where the characters are in the plot scenes, one to mark where the psychoses descriptions begin, and the third to mark where the combat result explanations are. Don't worry about writing on the reference card provided; with only four players it is easier to remember who is where and how they perceive things than it is to keep track on the card, and it's certainly much quicker. Considering how much time individual players have to spend doing nothing while you deal with their friends, every moment you can save is significant. And if you play with more than four characters, you are likely to be confused no matter what.

In some ways, I think the game bites off more than it can chew. While the central plot is extremely interesting, a few too many scenes end with the villains showing up and attacking yet again, so those scenes blur together in the GM's mind during the heat of play. A bit of plot simplification could help. Similarly, while the mechanic of translating psychotic vision to that central plot is well done, there are so many psychoses possible that the GM simply cannot keep the details of each in mind at all times. Yet, conversely, the game doesn't promote the switching of psychoses often enough to take advantage of them all. Consequently, the GM is left with some disappointment at the psychoses left unvisited by the end of the game. And on top of the confusing situation the PCs find themselves in, the players also have to learn the use of Tarot cards in the game. I cannot think of any specific reason that Tarot cards should be used rather than normal cards or even dice (other than that they lend the game an aura of mystery for potential buyers).

This certainly isn't the RPG to end all RPGs, and it isn't for everyone. But it can be an extremely fun diversion for players willing to go with its flow. And while I think the claim of six to eight sessions is extreme (my own group played through it in two long sessions, roughly equivalent to three normal evenings of play), this is certainly an adventure I will run more than once, for different groups of players. As a matter of fact, I'm sure that the second running will be even better than the first, because of mistakes I learned from during the first time around. What's more, I will definitely pick up the next *Psychosis* campaign book and run it, and I don't expect to have any trouble finding players.

Short & Sweet

CRITTER-TEK* game (by L. Douglas Garrett, Crunchy Frog Enterprises, 889 Mowry Ave. #105, Fremont CA 94536). What is it about cute, anthropomorphic animals that so fascinates people? I'm sure I don't know. Nonetheless, there is something very charming, and funny, about the CRITTER-TEK game's amalgamation of cartoon animal people, Minor League baseball, and the BATTLETECH* game universe. The baseball motif allows ComStar to become Allstar, and the Inner Sphere to become the Infield systems, for instance. The critter motif gives rise to House Deviant of the Amphibian Suns, House Purina of the Draconian Combine, and other atrocities immediately recognizable to any follower of the BATTLETECH game. The rules mechanics are pretty much straightforwardly taken from the parent game as well, though with humorous twists (such as the "Sweat" phase). Crunchy Frog has certainly learned how to make a good-looking book, but it's also a good read, with lots of subtle touches hidden within the more blatant parody. Definitely give this one a try.

MACHO WOMEN WITH GUNS* game, 2nd Edition (by Greg Porter, Blacksburg Tactical Research Center, 1925 Airy Circle, Richmond, VA 23233, $10.00). I remember picking up the original first edition of this game, before the second first edition added the "Fun Guys from Yuggoth" adventure and the cardboard figures (which used to have extra folds in the "top-heavy" characters). Back then, the satire was fresh and hilarious, and each supplement (the RENEGADE NUNS ON WHEELS* book, the BAT-WINGED BIMBOS FROM HELL* book, and the rerelease of the original game with the aforementioned adventure and figures) just added to the laughter. I even went so far as to *play* the game (there is actually a respectable system within its pages), using the SKY GALLEONS OF MARS* game maps for a hex grid (imagine trying to climb those crags in high heels). Now much of the original humor is dated (does anyone play the RENEGADE LEGION: INTERCEPTOR* game any more, or is the point of the renegade nun's vehicle damage flowchart lost?). But not to worry, because in this new "revised, classic, updated, exploitation edition" package, which consolidates all the old books into one, while pretty much all the old humor has been retained for the nostalgic (except the multi-fold characters), lots of new humor has been added to spice things up. The result is a way cool package that you ought to own, even if you already have the originals. What's more, it comes in your choice of four different covers (each of the original book covers, or a nice bit of cheesecake by Mark E. Rogers).

Correction

The address for Back Stage Press, publisher of the THEATRIX* RPG, changed between the time the review copy arrived and the time the review itself was printed in issue #217. The correct address is Back Stage Press, PO Box 170243, San Francisco, CA 94117. Ω

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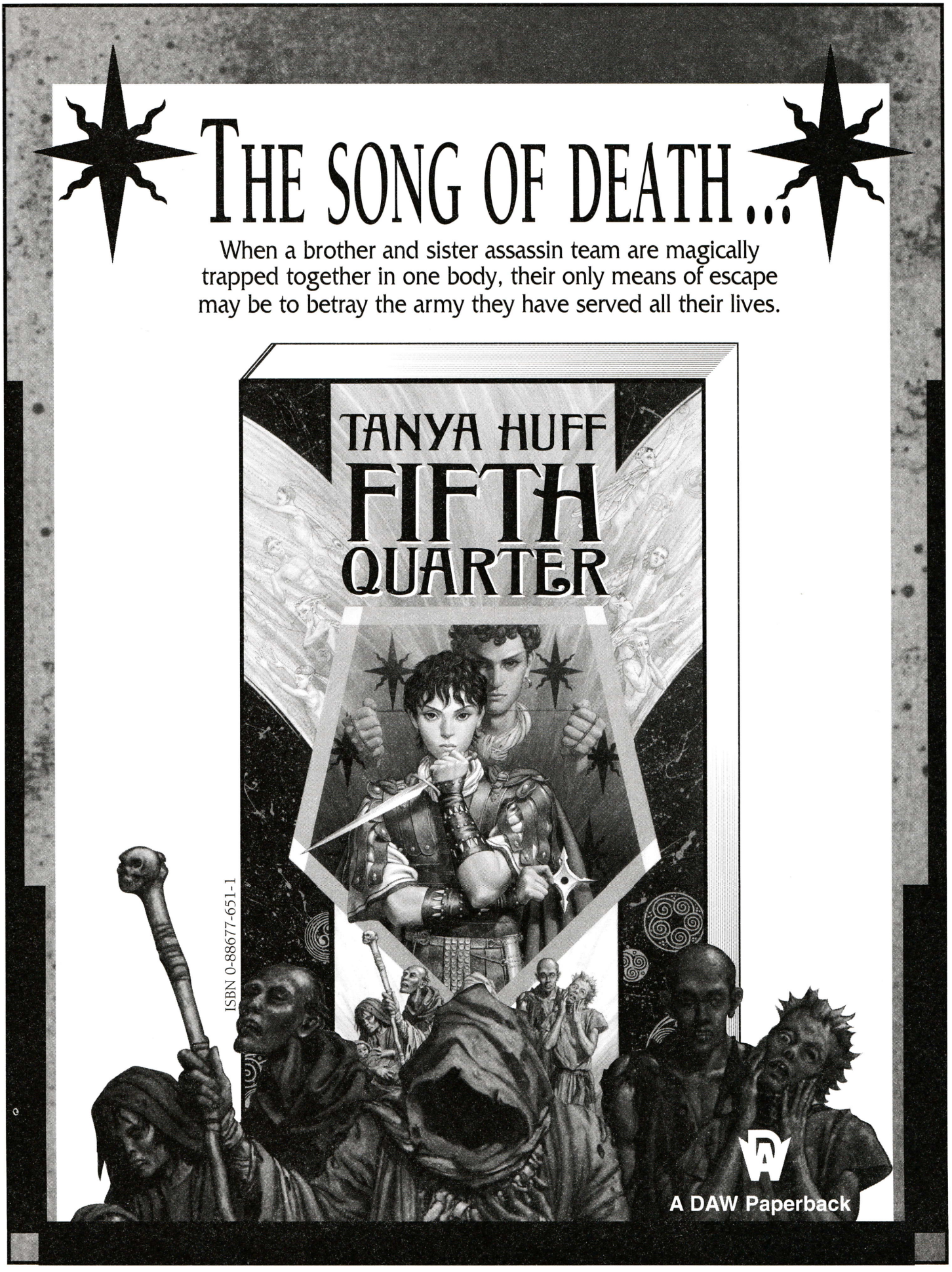
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Forum

"Teaching a player to role-play is not the DM's job."

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I wanted to respond to Joe Walker's letter in issue 218, concerning the invincible player-characters in his campaign, including a mage slinging *wish* spells around with complete impunity. I think Mr. Walker and his players lack an understanding of the limitations of wishes. While it is well within the limitations of a *wish* to grant temporary immunities to broad categories of spells or attacks, to grant a mage total immunity to the adverse effects or penalties associated with any spell he casts doesn't just threaten game balance, it totally annihilates it!

The penalties associated with *wishes* (aging and temporary loss of strength) or other powerful spells exist to prevent such abuses of power. A mage who could cast *permanency* at will without penalty, for instance, could have a major impact on a campaign world! The possible abuses of wishes are too numerous to list, and the *Complete Wizard's Handbook* gives a more thorough explanation than can be printed here, but I would like to share my three rules for adjudicating wishes:

1) Major increases in powers or ability scores must be *temporary.* Major increases include any raising of abilities over 18. This rule also applies to that potion-quaffing paladin (Did someone say "cursed potion"?).

2) You cannot wish for more *wishes.* You *could* wish for one more *wish,* but what would be the point?

3) Greed is *always* punished. Every folk-tale warns of the consequences of greedy or poorly worded wishes.

The nicest and most efficient way to handle this situation is for Mr. Walker to explain to his players that he is going to be stricter in how he adjudicates wishes. If the excesses continue, the game provides several less pleasant ways to deal with it:

1) Negative effects: Wishes don't always come true. The sudden onset of all that accumulative, temporarily delayed aging will teach that wizard that it's not nice to mess with the causality of the universe!

2) Reality bites: Wishes alter reality to achieve their goals. That mage may not care that he's warping the fabric of reality, but when weird things begin to happen to *him* (confused tanar'ri materialize in his wardrobe, prized possessions turn into loathsome things, etc.) he'll sit up and take notice.

And of course, let's not forget that such profligate use of power is bound to attract the attention of the arch-mages, liches, fiends and powers that abound in the average game-world! As a last note, Mr. Walker should remember that while player's should have input in the game, in the end the DM is the final authority.

Tim Jones
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Lavinia TN 38348

After I finished choking on a sandwich while reading Joe Walker's letter (issue #218), I had to say something. Invincible PCs, eh? Joe, it's the players that are walking all over you. Whatever a character is trying to do, it's ultimately up to you, not the players, to decide the chance of success and the consequences of failure. A player can always find plausible, logical reasons why what his PC is doing should work. Hear him out, by all means, but remember that he's biased. For example:

Problem: A paladin hires an alchemist to make potions that raise all the paladin's ability scores to 18.

Solution: I wish a player in my game would try this. The fun I could have . . . Anyway, this is far too much power for mere potions. Have the effects wear off starting, ohh, about now. The paladin will pay the wizard still more huge sums (rather than giving to the poor and needy—there's a paladin headed for a fall) to make more. The wizard will take the money, try his best, and fail. He'll be very puzzled because the original formula no longer works ("Must be the new cycle of the sun."), and he'll be happy to waste any further money he's given on fruitless experiments and research. The prospect of an eager paladin testing experimental potions is fraught with comic possibilities.

Problem: Wizard abuses the *wish* spell, even using it to reverse the aging it causes him.

Solution: Anything a PC wizard can do, NPC wizards can do too, and they probably thought of it centuries ago. Picture a world overrun with immortal archmages who sling *wishes* around like cantrips. Ugh. Magical aging is an important limitation on powerful spells (including resurrection, by the way). Never allow a PC to get out of it. If a wizard wishes for an effect taht you consider too powerful, have the spell fail or produce some lesser effect or some very limited duration. Or, as the book suggests, twist the intent. If he wishes to be younger, make him younger mentally, so that he loses experience, levels, and spells accumulated over the years (and perhaps can no longer cast another wish to restore his original age and level!). If he wishes for immunity to magical side effects, encase him in an anti-magic shell that suppresses all magic, including his own. *Wish* should be a very useful spell, but it's meant to be used carefully and sparingly.

I've been a GM for 16 years now (half my life!). My first campaign foundered under the weight of too many wishes, too many levels, and too much magic. I've since grown accustomed to players trying to force their interpretations of the rules on me:

"I polymorph into a dragon; now I can carry the whole party." (Read the spell description again.)

"If I say my god's name, there's a 10% chance he'll appear." (Maybe in your campaign.)

"He wouldn't know I'm casting a spell at him. I pretend I'm praying." (Right. And you don't know he's swinging a sword at you—it looks like he's swatting a fly.)

Such attempts to usurp the GM's decision-making authority don't mean you've got bad players. On the contrary, it shows they're involved and interested. Just be fair. Ask yourself if you would let an NPC get away with the same thing. In fact, one of the best tests of a dubious tactic or spell usage by the party is to have an NPC or monster employ it against them.

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You'll be amazed at the reasons they'll be able to find for why it shouldn't work.

Finally, a bit of heresy: You outrank the rule books. Even if it's there in black and white, you don't have to allow it if you think it will make the game less enjoyable. And if the players are having everything their way, never being seriously challenged, they won't enjoy it for long.

Alan Clark
Merndon, VA

I am responding to the requests from two DMs from issue #218. To Joe Walker, I suggest one thing, "Retire the PCs." Almost every DM overdoes it, the first time they take the job. I suggest that the least that you should do is to make them powerful NPCs in your game world under your control. The best solution would be to have the respective PC's deity take them as special servants or messengers of the gods (Under your control, of course). This removes them from the campaign, making way for newer, younger, heroes. Either way, you can start over and use what you have learned.

I think you'll find that just about every regular group of players invents many new items, spells, monsters, etc. The groups that I have gamed with have invented various and sundry spells, magical items, artifacts, monsters, and even character classes. Some work, some don't and are subsequently dropped from the game. DRAGON Magazine has had many articles on the subject and received many submissions on the subject. RPGA Network's POLYHEDRON® Newszine has regular design contests. So yes, many DMs and players do this. Have fun.

To Mike Clair, I may be able to help with advice on being a DM, as I am sure many readers could. One suggestion is to get back issues of DRAGON® Magazine if possible. Many articles have been written on the subject. Many of the questions about being a DM may take up a lot of space, so I am enclosing my address so that you can write me directly.

On "teaching" players to role play, that can be hard. My opinion is that the DM can be a big influence in that direction. The bottom line is *you set the tone.* Your acting can bring out your players' acting. In your example of the man in the street, you can give him (and other NPCs) more life by planning ahead. Make up some generic townsmen ahead of time. Think about them: maybe one man is in a hurry and can't be bothered, or the party scares him (what would you do if a group of heavily armed people came walking toward you?), or he may be in a such bad mood that he deliberately sends them to a dangerous part of town (somewhere where your PCs could have some problems, er, adventures). Thieves could rob them, beggars accost them, they might even get lost in the narrow streets, with ramshackle buildings looming over them, the occasional sound of furtive movement nearby, children and others running from them when they try to ask directions. You get the picture. When your PCs might (quite reasonably) be upset and want an accounting from the man who sent them here. When they track him down, maybe they find he is actually a rich merchant, noble, or even a spy from another fief or kingdom. As you can see, this can go on and on. Suddenly, you have many little side adventures have opened up, adventures that can lead to even bigger things.

The main "secret" is to put life into the NPCs. If you do it often enough, your players will start getting into the swing of it themselves. Try to talk differently (accents, higher or lower tones). Think of various attitudes; aloof, boorish, gregarious, taciturn. If you are unsure of their meaning, look them up. Think how you would act with that attitude and put it into your NPCs and PCs.

I have dealt with all sorts of players, from outstanding role players, to your average roll players. Do I put this much preparation into every NPC in every single campaign I run? No. But infusing character into key NPCs makes the game more enjoyable for all. Being a DM is not for the faint of heart; it takes a lot of work on your part, but when the players start telling you how much fun they had, and you notice them getting into their roles, you will enjoy the game so much more. The job isn't easy, but it will get easier. Good luck and be sure to write.

Eric Aune
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I am unhappy about recent trends in TSR. TSR is one of the few companies that is in constant, direct contact with its consumers. Thus, I feel I have the right to voice my opinion about where I think TSR is headed.

TSR is headed in the wrong direction.

TSR's primary product, the AD&D® game, has changed greatly since its beginning in 1974. TSR says that the changes made over 21 years have been good. I agree—to a point.

It is so frustrating now! When the rules first appeared, one could make a character relatively quickly.

Not anymore. There are so many optional rules: does one use weapon proficiencies, non-weapon proficiencies, secondary skills, weapons vs. armor types, methods of rolling up ability scores, which classes are allowed, are kits allowed for characters, is this or that weapon allowed, is group or individual initiative used, should optional modifiers for surprise be used, are evil alignments allowed, which monster races can players be if any, is a character dead or unconscious at zero hit points, are spell components required? Note that I did not look those options up; I wrote them right off the top of my head.

A DM has to, at some point, decide whether he will use these options, generally as they pop up during play. The DM has to compromise with players who like the idea of spell components, but who will give them up, for being allowed unconsciousness at negative hit points. All this has to be resolved before the game ever starts, or the game will have to shut down during the debate, often at an exciting moment.

Even when the above options have been decided on, the confusion is by no means over. Are some of your characters from the DRAGONLANCE® setting? "Where's that?" "What's a kender?" "Why is your kender shouting and jumping up and down at the enemy?" "Why is steel used for money instead of gold and silver?" "A red-robed mage? Wait . . . is he a specialist like a necromancer?" "A Dark Queen" "Oh . . . you mean Tiamat! Wait . . . can Tiamat be a supreme goddess? Well, I already had a supreme evil goddess but I'll try to—say! I'll fit her in too, even though it might be kind of awkward . . . we'll make it somehow with two supreme evil goddesses. I'll deal with it later."

Or are a few of your characters from Athas? "Athas? What's that?" "Hey, why are his characters starting at 3rd level? I should be able to have one start at 3rd level, too." "I don't care what level I start out at, but at the least we should all start out at either 1st or 3rd level, together. That way it's fair." "If you were fair, you would let me use psionics . . ."

Or perhaps they're visiting the RAVENLOFT® setting: "A horror check! I thought I decided when I was afraid." "Why is this vampire so powerful? Just owning the land doesn't make him so powerful!" "I know . . . the vampire's a god . . . No, a god could leave his land and travel on other lands."

As if integrating all this together without driving away players wasn't enough, try this: what if some characters are from historical Scandinavia? Ireland? Ancient Rome? Greece? Mesopotamia? Africa?

If you are a DM, all this diversity degenerates into a nightmare. I have spent an evening where an hour and a half was spent arguing about the availability of a kender into the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. At the same time, my DM also had to confront a second player. This player eventually went home because he couldn't add spells from the *Tome of Magic* (which my DM hadn't seen before) to his "generic" cleric.

I was upset when I was forced to choose nonweapon proficiencies, even when I didn't know what they were about. I had to use them because a fellow player insisted on them (he got them because he couldn't use the Cavalier kit for his paladin). I said, "Hey, I like my character the way he is, let's play!"

But we didn't play. While I read up on nonweapon proficiencies, my DM couldn't even decide on a module. My DM had bought a boxed set of the Mystara setting, and he couldn't find an adventure module.

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A fellow player said that he had a great DRAGONLANCE adventure for the DM. "Quick and easy to learn," he said. We spent thirty minutes more arguing with one player about trying a DRAGONLANCE adventure.

"I came over to play in the Realms," I said. "My wizard has a business in Tilverton."

"Why are you always so argumentative? Try something else, just this once. C'mon! Be reasonable."

We were so tired of arguing that I agreed. We tried to learn the ins and outs of the DRAGONLANCE setting from this player, but by the time he had finished telling the DM about it, the DM told him to run the game himself, since he wanted that setting so badly.

I tried to understand the differences, but I didn't want to waste any more time. I went home, although I said I had a good time. I tried to be tolerant, but the whole evening was wasted! No adventure! None!

When the second edition came out, I expected that the need for handbooks and supplements would lessen. When I played the original D&D® game, I did not have to use a suitcase to haul around all the books necessary to play.

Nor, when we first played the original D&D game, did we argue much about using this-or-that supplement. Some people will undoubtedly suspect me of being a "roll-player" as opposed to a "role-player." But I tell you that I like both "role-playing" and "roll-playing" as much as anyone.

Even in the "throwback" days of the original D&D, with few things to write on my character sheet, I had more time to develop my character and adventure than I do now.

Everyone at TSR seems to look down on the original D&D game. I do not have the rules (my original DM moved away, taking the rules with him), but I know it was fun.

It may not have been so "advanced" and "sophisticated," but I liked it. Realistic or not, it was *fun.* It was FUN!

I wish TSR would reprint the original D&D rules, and say that "this will be allowed, and this won't." At least that way, all this arguing wouldn't be necessary.

I have introduced over 20 players to the game (that's a lot down in the Bible Belt). I really like the game, but now I don't know with which rules to begin with and which to end with.

TSR says the DM should have the final word. My DM forbade using any supplements, and every player except me and one other quit playing in our group. Now I have to go back and forth between groups. God forbid it should be like the old days, when I could just use one character who I understand, and the other who has abilities I only pretend to understand.

John Holcomb
Ft. Worth TX

This is in response to Michelle Vuckovich's editorial entitled "Women on the Verge" (issue #216).

Currently I am a senior in high school and have been an avid role player of various RPG games. I have an extensive network of role-playing friends that span most of Orlando. I both DM and play with my friends and my brother's friends, who are just beginning high school. At any time of day I can call together a large RPG group for any system, with players of all ages and from all walks of life. It seems like every week I meet a new player or a new potential role player.

Why am I telling you all this? Because of all the role-players I know, only two are female. One rarely plays—only when her cousin (a guy) does and if she has a day off work. The other hasn't played in years. This bothered me because my circumstance seems to prove the stereotype that "role playing is a man's game." To prove this wrong I have tried to find female role-players, just to see if they are there. I've checked bulletin boards in local comic shops (people interested in role playing post their name, likes, and dislikes), I've had all my fellow gamers ask their female acquaintances, and I even posted messages on the main forum of some local BBSes, all to no avail!

Personally I feel that an all-male group unbalances the adventure. It provides a slight element of unreality, and in some cases players have done what medieval playwrights used to do and play female characters. This produces mixed results, mainly on the downside. At best, I've seen very masculine female characters, and at worst you wouldn't know the character was female unless you looked the character sheet!

Granted, I know that this is not the case everywhere, and probably in some areas the reverse is true, with female role players hunting high and low for male gamers. From my point of view, and from talking with various female friends and acquaintances, role playing is "wrong" for various reasons: it is a game for "immature" people, or I just get blank stares. Finally I just gave up.

Don't get me wrong. I didn't have any ulterior motives behind asking, I merely felt that the lack of female gamers within my network had to do with preconceived notions that they would not be accepted, or even that the people I played with claimed role playing is a man's game. I have always considered it a crime for people to be excluded from anything they enjoy or would enjoy doing.

Also, I noticed that DMs frequently write in with problems that center around one basic topic: power gamers. Power gamers inevitably develop in a group. Once players become familiar with the rules there will be more powerful characters, as players learn what they left out of making their older characters, and they uncover the weak spots and loopholes in the rules. In addition, supplemental modules invariably grant the PC additional equipment, powers, spells, and kits, all of which develop in a different style from "classic" kit characters, and if introduced may appear more powerful than the "classics" everyone else is using. Lastly, in any system there are ways of making a character more powerful during or after design: cybernetics, superpowers, psionics, magic spells, and magic items. Over time a player inevitably acquires some of these boosts for his character. Therefore characters eventually spiral toward the power-gamer character.

But the question wasn't how it happens, but what to do about it, right? Well, since affecting PCs directly annoys players and is a hassle for the DM, I recommend that NPCs evolve with the characters. NPCs are not set in stone, and neither are creatures. Humanoids can use weapons, intelligent creatures can learn spells, and magical items help even creatures too stupid to know it (a *ring of invisibility* on a moose's antlers, for example). NPCs gain levels too. Remember that wizard they fought off when they were second level? Well, he's been studying and boy is he annoyed! If all else fails, the players can retire their old characters and make them patrons of their new ones. This gives them slightly more money to start, a safe haven to hide in, and maybe that a couple of extra spells for the first-level wizard from his mentor. Then, when the PCs are a little safer on their own, the old PCs can draw back (too busy). Perhaps new adventures can deal with helping the old characters!

Christopher Kelley
Orlando FL

This letter is in response to Eric Shearer's letter in issue #217. Eric asked how to start a successful campaign. Not too long ago I started a fairly successful campaign, and I thought Eric might benefit from what I went through then and am still going through today.

When I was considering a new campaign I did what someone in "Forum" suggested: I asked my players what they wanted to do and what kind of world they wanted to adventure in. The responses ranged from "I don't care" to a three-hour conversation on eternal struggles and politics. Luckily for me, I already had a starting point in mind: the module N5, *Under Illefarn.* It was a good starting point because it gave the characters a reason to be together even though they were total strangers. Briefly, all races of a certain age or who stay in town for too long must join the local militia.

OK, I had a starting point—now what? Maps of the town were provided, so I started to type out the key. I was doing well until I realized I didn't like the local pantheon. Before I could establish a deities list, I wanted to generate a world. I had several ideas from my last campaign that I wanted to incorporate.

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Sitting down to generate player's knowledge of the world was difficult only because I didn't know where to start. I already knew that I wanted an atmosphere based on the Roman Empire. Player's knowledge is just the propaganda they've heard while growing up. I included information about how the empire is governed, who runs the place or who should they know, common weapons, races living there, a very basic geography lesson, and who the "enemies" are. This became five single-spaced typed pages. Every potential player got a copy at least a week before characters were rolled up. About four weeks went by before it was finished. (Hey, I have a life).

A player expressed interest in playing a cleric. What deities could his character worship? Answering that question took about 80 hours, but the end result was a listing of every deity worshiped above or below the planet's surface. The list included alternate names of the deity in question, their spheres of influence, spells used by their specialty priests and extra abilities these priests gained. I had decided that there would be only specialty priests and separately, druids. Sources for this list included: the *Deities & Demigods* book, the DRAGONLANCE Campaign Sourcebook, the World of Greyhawk Sourcebook, the 1985 Lankhmar *City of Adventure*, the 1987 D&D® Gazeteer GAZ1, *the Grand Duchy of Karameikos, The Glory of Rome* sourcebook and the FORGOTTEN REALMS sourcebook. These sourcebooks were invaluable.

As is becoming obvious, I stole ideas from everywhere. The STAR WARS* setting had a very heavy influence on me as did all the sourcebooks mentioned above. If there was a map for it, it was included. If I thought it was workable, it went into the melting pot. What came out was a viable world that is fun to play in.

The first session went fairly well. About half the time was spent going over the player's characters. Examining nonweapon proficiencies and kits selected took a large amount of time, but soon the players were describing their characters to each other and were off on a mission. They survived and returned to be given more duties to perform, in and around the town of Daggerford.

I use several tools to assist me and keep the adventures going. In a discount store I found a teacher's daily planner. This book was converted into a campaign calendar of months and days, including important events in the PC's lives and background events that will affect them in the future. A subscription to DUNGEON® Adventures is a great help. A regular influx of ideas is invaluable, and many of the adventures there appear in my campaign. Since your letter appeared in DRAGON® Magazine, it is safe to assume that you read this magazine, but other magazines can be of great profit as well, since you're looking for ideas or adventures that can be easily adapted. Also, visit some local hobby stores and comic shops. You'll be amazed at the deals you can find there.

One of any player's best resources are his peers. As mentioned earlier, talk to your players to see if their role-playing needs are being met. After each game, before we all go home, I ask the group if they had a good time, and what they did or did not like. Realizing that peer pressure may keep some players from speaking out, I ask each player privately if he's happy with past events and what he wants to see in the future. So far, players have asked to: inherit a small keep to use as a base of operations, live longer (one player had two characters in a row slain), leave the militia before it becomes part of the regular army, and kill a NPC who feels the party slighted him and as a result causes all sorts of trouble for them. These are adventure ideas that I know at least some of the players will enjoy, so they are worth developing.

The previous campaign I ran was based on 12th to 14th level PCs who had died. The PCs were resurrected by a wizard who promptly had an accident and died. The party found itself in a strange land, and some PCs were foreign to them as well. The characters woke up in loin cloths, and the wizard had no spell components other than his clothes. After narrowly surviving an attack by the pregenerated characters, the newly-armed and armored party began a series of first level modules where they were always being knocked unconscious by lack of hit points. The fighter with 96 hit points was particularly irked by this. The priest could access only first and second level spells, and the wizard had no spell book and only a handful of spells in his memory. The campaign went well, considering the players had no past experience working together. Over a year later it collapsed when one player moved away, another stopped showing up and a couple found their schedule was no longer compatible with the remaining two players. It was great fun while it lasted and everyone still talks about it today. What made that world such fun was that it combined my ideas and the player's ideas and wove them into a real world. Eric, don't hesitate to talk to your players. Everyone sees and responds to things differently. The most unlikely people have the best ideas. Listen to everyone who has an idea even if you don't plan to use it.

Name withheld

This letter is in response to Mike Clair's letter in issue #218. One of the big hurdles a gamer must leap is keeping a campaign running smoothly. I'm sure that many other people will write in to "Forum" with their methods, and everyone will have one that works. Your job is to pick the one that you feel comfortable with and adapt it so it works with your world.

House rules change from DM to DM. I am currently in a group that allows any warrior to specialize in one weapon. Usually, only a fighter can specialize. My suggestion is to start without the PHBR books. Use just the basic player's and DM's handbooks and your favorite monster listings. After you get comfortable with the guidelines in those, say three or four gaming sessions, try adding the *Tome of Magic*. Once you feel that you and your players understand the guidelines, add more. Notice that I say "guidelines." All of the books that you have are nothing more than that. Don't feel that you are confined by the rules. If you or your players don't like a rule, change it. That's how you get house rules.

Making an adventure fun isn't all up to the DM. The players take a role in this too (pardon the pun). You mentioned that they feel embarrassed to act out some scenes in your campaign. One way to liven things up is to make it harder to get healing than just throwing money at the temple priest. Perhaps a little bartering or an exchange of services? Maybe the high priest has a small job for them before they get healed? This is a great way to get them interested,

Keeping PCs from figuring out the magic in a blade or item isn't as hard as it may seem. In our campaign, the DM keeps notecards at his desk with our names, levels, THAC0, and other information that we don't know. Let's say I have a +1 blade, and I have a THAC0 of 18. I'm fighting a foe with AC 8. I roll the die: 14. I tell him the roll, and he adds 1 for the magic, making it a 15. He then figures out if I hit the monster, which I did, because I only needed a 10 or higher to hit. Then I roll damage and tell him. He adds 1 to it. Easy, isn't it?

To make a dungeon creepy you have to be sneaky. This is like telling a story: the first thing you need is a good description. Throw out offhand comments like, "and in the corner is a small pile of old bones. Perhaps you aren't the first to be here?" From time to time, mention extra, unexpected noises, like a moan or screech from a long way away. There's no reason for them, but it adds to the spookiness. Cities are much the same as a dungeon, but a city change very fast. One moment, the PCs could be enjoying a show, the next they could be in the middle of a small riot caused by a pickpocket, or they could say something that is overheard by a citizen, and reported to the city watch.

Teaching a player to role-play is not the DM's job. It is something that you grow into slowly. Some people take to it right away, and you see wonderful personas develop from that first level character. A PC might not be happy with the character they have, perhaps because they feel the attributes are too low. When you don't like a character you have to play, the game loses its fun.

Everybody starts as a beginning DM at some time or other. All it takes is a little work, and a lot of fun.

Jess Hallsworth
Moose Jaw, SK, Canada

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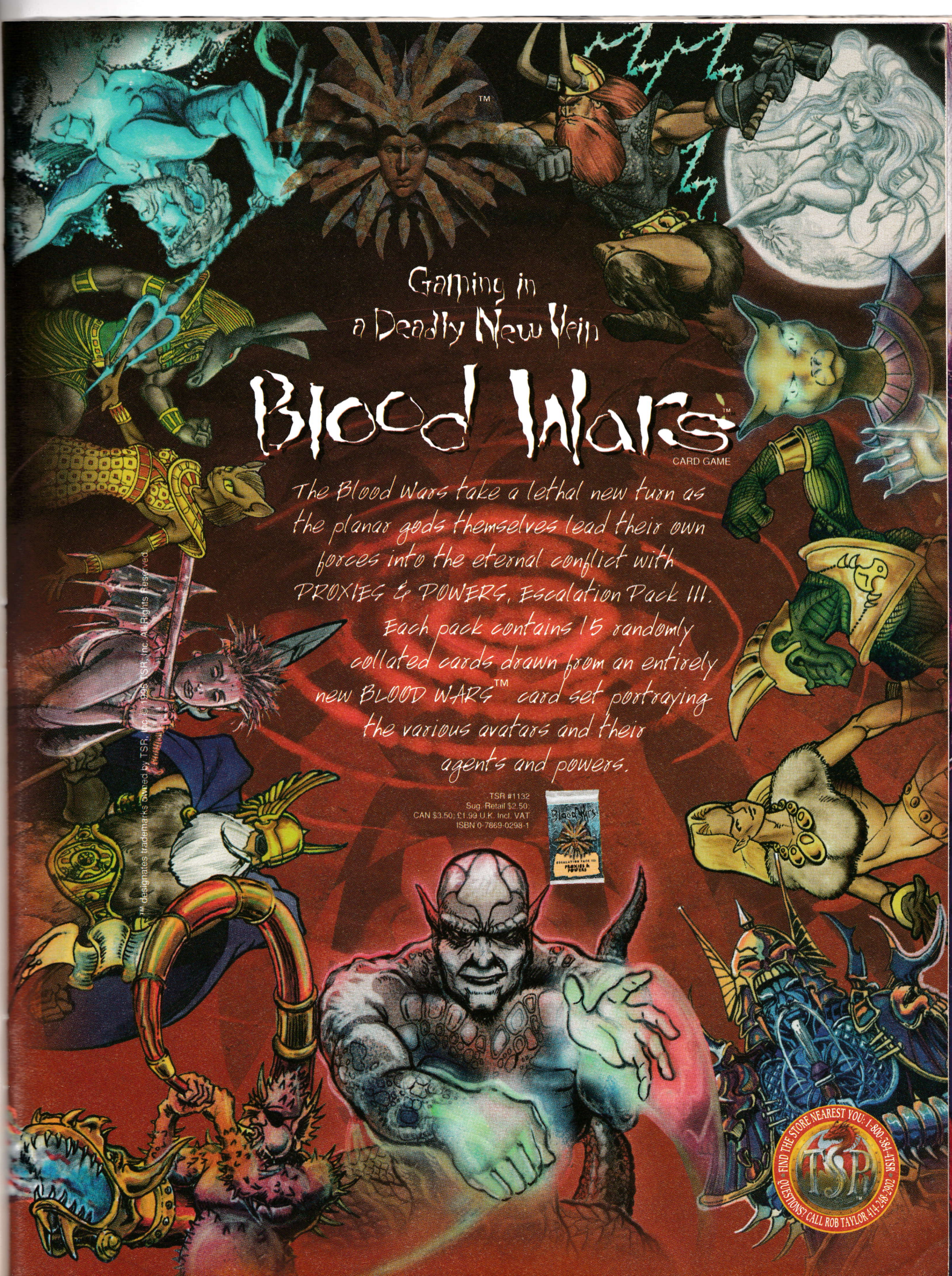
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EYE OF THE MONITOR

Enough of these computerized role-playing *exercises—no more grainy animated movies* passing themselves off as interactive experience, no more of these game platform ninja kick-and-kill fighters, and a pox on the horde of virtually unreal you-are-there shooters! What about the "microchips are smarter than you, so watch out buddy" promise of real games for computers? You know, like the ones those Pentagon guys must surely be playing in their secret rooms on Cray supercomputers in their copious free time? Huh? Where's the real *game* games for the computer? I don't want a pseudo role-playing thingie—*I want a real game!*

Hey, if you ain't guessed, this month's theme is real games for your computer. You know, the type of game where you have to think about tactics, strategy, and what the heck the other guy is up to. So without wasting any more precious verbiage here's to it. (*Wait a minute, we get paid by the word!*)

Warcraft: Orcs & Humans

Blizzard Entertainment
Box 18077
Irvine, CA 92713
1-800-953-SNOW (sales)
email: blizzrdent@aol.com
Street price: approx. $40
Requirements: PC compatible running DOS 5.0 or better, 386 processor, VGA monitor, 4 megs.
Copy protection: Dopey but easy manual lookup.
Reviewed by Paul Murphy

Look. I love these orcs, see? I give them orders, and they reply in guttural orcish grunts—"Dagu!" I poke them with my cursor, and they say, "What?!" in real surly orcish voices. And, best of all, when those pale dog humans approach, my orcs go out and scrap with them. Pretty soon orcs and humans are going *splat* and flopping over with a pathetic cry; in seconds, their bodies decay to bones. Which is extra fine, 'cause my necrolyte (graduate of the unholy temple, majoring in sinister sorceries) turns the rotting stiffs into cute little ambulatory skeletons I can send over to the human village to bother the human working stiffs.

What's Going On Here?

It's *Warcraft: Humans & Orcs,* a heroic fantasy strategy game. There's a big map, with swamp and forest and rivers and bridges and silver mines and stuff. You play the part of orcs or humans. You want to make a nice little village, make it grow into a big town with unholy temples and towers and stuff. Of course, the bad guys—orcs or humans—desperately want to burn down your village and slaughter your folks. Why? Because that's what bad guys do, see? (Of course, admittedly, you are pretty keen to burn down *his* village and slaughter *his* folks . . . but when *you* do it, it's *heroic.*)

On the map, you see your guys from the top down in old Ultima style. It's like being an orcish god looking down on the battlefield. You take your mouse cursor and poke a guy and *bingo*—he's ready to take orders. You click on different icons, depending on whether he's a peon or a warrior or a priest, telling him either to build a nice farm or wolf kennel, or to go scout or wallop some bad guys, or to rain fire on guys, or to make corpses get up and get to work. You can shift-click up to four guys at once, so four guys get orders at once. This turns out to be Very Important, because lots of guys are wandering around chopping down trees, mining gold, building things, and butchering bad guys. Things get especially hectic when bad guys wander over and slaughter your warriors, knock down your buildings, and chase your terrified peons around the map.

Blood Bowl (MicroLeague)

Resource Management
At the heart of *Warcraft* is resource management. The side whose peasants suck silver and hack timber from the mines and forests fastest—turning these resources into workers, soldiers, holy and unholy men, engines of war, and emerging slaughter technology—is the one who's gonna kick fantasy butt.

First you have to explore a big hidden map to find these resources. Then you have to produce lots of peasants to harvest these resources and deliver them to your village—your very own fantasy-medieval military-industrial complex. You build farms to feed folks, barracks to create troops, mills and blacksmiths to advance your slaughter technology, and unholy temples and wizard towers which produce the ultimate in magical high tech weaponry. This medieval arms race is very exciting. Lose the arms race, and your troops are gonna get butchered in a humiliating fashion.

Exploration
I *love* beginning war games on a big black, opaque map, with a tiny little colorful area around my beginning units. And *Warcraft* is great in this respect. Once one of your guys has visited an area of the map, its features, and the activities of your opponent, are revealed. In my early games against the computer opponent, this was my prime source of gaming fun.

Small Unit Tactics
Group together up to four units at a time for orders. (Apparently a pre-release version permitted shift-click-select for larger numbers of units in a single group—a plan that was abandoned when it was realized that the confusion of command-control was Loads of Fun.) Command units to MOVE to a spot, or to ATTACK a specific unit (or attack enemies near a selected point), or to STOP and await further orders. Troops do not have morale, so they do not break or flee, but they DO wander out of defensive positions into melee through a deadly barrage of arrows and fire. (Wish I had a HOLD or DEFEND command, but command control challenges are gaming fun!)

Your Opponent
Fun though *Warcraft* is, the computer opponent is pretty weak. How much pleasure you get from the game depends greatly on how you expect to use it. If you learn the game in the campaign scenarios against the computer, the early scenarios are quite satisfying. If you learn the game against another human opponent, however, the campaigns against the computer will disappoint.

Later campaign scenarios are balanced by giving the computer opponent huge advantages in men, material, and terrain, producing a difficult but dull conflict. To win, you either discover the key to a given strategic puzzle, or excel at Tenacious Drudgery in managing resources.

Campaign Games Against the Computer
Warcraft provides two campaign sequences of 12 linked scenarios—one for orcs, one for humans. Since I played the game against the computer opponent for about a month before I tried a human opponent, I was well-satisfied by the first six scenarios, but after starting two of the later scenarios, I abandoned them for lack of interest and patience. I also began by playing the orc campaign straight through. You might have more fun and learn the minor contrasts between orcs and humans, by alternating scenarios from the human and orc campaigns. Playing head-to-head games will spoil you for playing against the weak computer opponent—so if you want to get your money's worth, play the computer-opponent campaign scenarios before moving on to human opponents.

Race Differentiation & Game Balance
Okay. It's a disappointment that orc and human troops and resources are basically identical. I want orcs and humans to feel different. I'm a huge fan of Games Workshop heroic-fantasy tabletop strategy games—in particular, the theatrical and strategic distinctions between races. Orcs should be dumb, loud, durable, childish, aggressive, disorderly—a command-control nightmare. Humans should be cautious, subtle, serious—weedy, but fairly disciplined.

Warcraft lacks these powerful theatrical and strategic tools. *Warcraft* achieves game balance by making orcs and humans virtually identical—a reliable game balance strategy but a weak development of dramatic resources.

Head-to-Head Play
Here's where the extra fun is. *Warcraft* provides head-to-head play through direct link, modem, or network. You can play orc vs. orc, human vs. human, or orc vs. human. You choose from a variety of maps, or generate a random map, and can custom-select the size of the evenly-matched forces. Here you can't go sneaking back to a saved position when a gambit goes wrong, and another human player is infinitely more challenging and entertaining than the computer. Head-to-head players rejoice! You only need the CD in one of the two computers to play head-to-head.

Evaluation
Warcraft: Humans & Orcs is great fun—absorbing and colorful. It is VERY rare that I get 30-40 hours of satisfying play from a computer game. Against human opponents, it's excellent; against the computer opponent, it is good enough for beginning players, but becomes increasingly unsatisfactory for experienced players or those who have played head-to-head. Though not in the league of *Civilization, SimCity, Populous,* or *Doom, Warcraft* has a unique feature those games lack—lovable small unit tactics. Even against the computer opponent, this aspect of gameplay—the pace of interactivity, command and unit response, maneuver and confusion, the wavering fortunes of battle—all are barrels of fun.

Handy Tips
From online services or directly from Blizzard, get the free Version 1.21 Upgrade, which includes a unit editor for customizing the statistics of the races and some nifty cheat codes. Also get the *Warcraft* F.A.Q. by Chris Asher (xen@ind3x-.dircon.co.uk), with handy tactical tips and lists of creature statistics, magic, and technology.

Machiavelli

Microprose Entertainment Software
180 Lakefront Drive
Hunt Valley MD 21030
(410) 771-1151
Suggested Retail Price $47.95
Requirements: IBM PC or 100% compatible, 486x or better, 256 colors SVGA, Soundblaster-compatible sound card
Reviewed by David "Zeb" Cook

Okay, it's not exactly fantasy, but it's not exactly history either. What? What, you want to know? Why, *Machiavelli* the latest *Railroad Tycoon*-in-a-new-incarnation from Microprose. It's the game of merchant princes in the Renaissance world.

It's Venice, the year 1300 and you've got a ship sitting in the Lagoon waiting for a cargo. (You might have more than one ship if you selected an easier difficulty level.) All you have to do is buy a cargo and a guard unit, go to another city, and sell your goods. That's it, the game in a nutshell—buy low, sell high, make lots of money, and win.

Image of the World
Of course, nothing is ever that easy. First off, you start with a sort-of blank map of the world. In the game set-up, you can choose to play in the real world where Venice is here and Rome is over yonder, or a random world where Venice is here and Rome is—somewhere else. In the same way as *Civilization* or *Warcraft* you see only as much of the world as you've explored. Sure, you've heard about Rome, but have you actually ever been there? In a nice feature, the screen's not completely black. This ain't the Dark Ages, by god! In the sepia tones of an old map, you see the location of coastlines, rivers, mountains, and cities—sort of. It turns out that the farther you get from home, the less and less that map has to do with reality. A nice touch, really—following the little hints, you can set out on a search for the rumored pleasure domes of Kublai Khan and wind up in really strange territory. This feature works with both the historical and random maps, making the random maps even more entertaining.

Getting Rich
Buying and selling is what this game is all

about. Start in a city, or enter one, and you get the commodities screen, a selection of appropriately medieval goods: gold, wool, iron, glass, gems, relics, nutmeg, and more. Some cities produce one or more of these things, most cities will buy them. Next to each is a scale of how much the city makes or wants and how much it costs or they'll pay. With the mouse, you select the goods you want to buy and load them into your cargo holds (holds are divided into boxes and one item goes into each box). The object is, of course, to buy what's cheap and sell what's expensive.

After loading up, you set out into the unknown. Hopefully you remembered a guard, because there are bandits and pirates out there—and storms and rockfalls, but guards won't do you much good against them. Oh yeah, and then there's plague, which is kind of fun when it shows up. You can make a killing since prices go way up in plague cities but your little traders tend to die when they go there. Anyway, you find another city, sell stuff, buy stuff, and set out again. If you find a good deal, you can set up a trade route, stopping at up to four cities, and your little caravan or ship goes on autopilot, hopefully raking in the bucks.

And Spending It

So, what do you do with all this money? You spend it on galleys, large and small; cogs, large and small; and caravans, donkey or camel. Choose the city these start from and organize them into groups if you want. The ships get launched with a satisfying little splash and cheer, and the donkeys have a particularly entertaining whipcrack and bray.

Venice

What keeps this from being just a complete trading game is Venice. Whenever you want, you can go back home and stick your nose into local politics. First off, there's the Doge and his senators. Senators take donations (bribes) and join your faction. Every ten years there's the election of a new Doge. Your senators vote for whom you say. If you have a seat on the council, the new Doge may give you a job. As a sign of the design philosophy here, although generallisimo or admiral sound tempting, the job you really want is road builder. That way you can build roads through Africa and Asia that help you and don't do a thing for the competition. Who needs roads from Venice to, say, Florence when there's a route to be built from Anxi to Antioch first? History be damned!

If you get enough votes, you can become Doge. This, too, is not a great as it sounds, since you can't give your own people all the jobs. You have to give them out to your enemies! You can raise taxes (although it's not real clear that you get to keep the money).

If politics don't interest you, try the church. The principle's the same here. You can buy cardinals and if you buy enough cardinals you can make yourself Pope, when the current one gets sick and dies. As Pope you can excommunicate cities (which has some, but not profound, effect on their trade), call crusades (you get an army), or raise the indulgence rate (the amount of cash your cardinals bring in).

Those feeling generous can buy works of art, build villas, donate to the church, and throw parties. These raise your popularity, although why you want to is not particularly clear. Unfortunately, when you buy art, it's generic. Given the abundance of Renaissance art, it would have been nice to have a few choices. ("I'll take the Pieta, but that David has got to go!")

Those wanting bloodshed can hire mercenaries. You can have these guys wander around and attack "closed" cities, beat up rivals, or just sit around defending things (and spending your money). Combat is simplistic and, aside from attacking, you've got no control over it. Generally it's not worth the bother, especially since everyone just seems to get mad at you.

Finally, there's skullduggery. You can hire arsonists to burn down rival warehouses, slanderers to lower your enemies popularity, and assassins. These can target senators, cardinals, the Doge, and the Pope, in case you grow tired of waiting for these folks to die. Of course, using these scoundrels tends to mean you get caught and then everybody picks on you.

Multi-Player Games

Machiavelli boasts multi-player play either at one machine, by disk, or by modem. To be honest, I couldn't bring myself to try any, even though the political and intrigue parts of the game might be vastly improved. The prospect of changing seats so each person could use the machine was right out. Likewise, since it's a turn-based game, passing around a disk so everyone can do their turn (thus taking days to finish one round) just didn't appeal in a 100 + turn game, and I can't imagine the size of my phone bill trying to do the equivalent through my slow modem. Multi-user play is a feature, but it's just not a well-realized one.

Summing Up

If you get the impression I'm not overwhelmed by the game, you're right. Now, there's nothing inherently wrong with what's there—it's just that there's not enough. *Machiavelli* quickly becomes a game of doing the same old thing over and over. For a game that touts its historical basis (it even comes with a copy of *The Prince* in the box), it just doesn't mine the richness of their period. There's no war, only a hint of the Reformation, no technological advances, and precious few surprises. It's just a shame.

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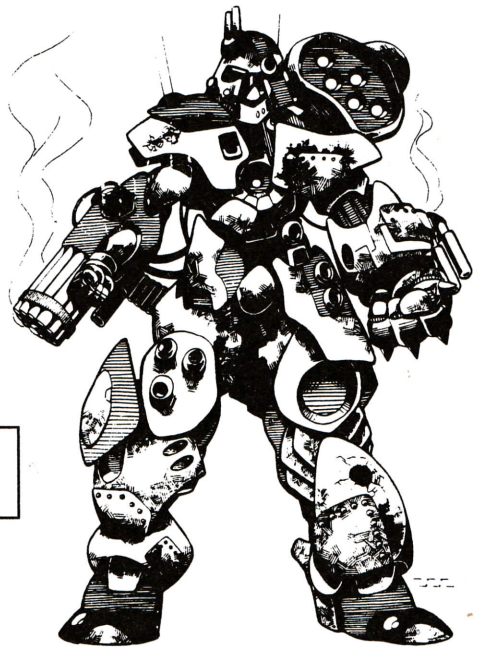

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Blood Bowl

MicroLeague Interactive Software
1001 Millersville Road, Box 4547
Lancaster, PA 17604-4547
717-872-6567
Suggested Retail Price: $49.95
Requirements: IBM PC or 100% compatible. 486sx/25 or better, DOS 5.0 or higher, 4MB RAM, VGA, 2X CD-ROM drive, hard drive. Mouse recommended. Supports all major sound cards.
Reviewed by Paul Murphy

Blood Bowl (MicroLeague)

This Sport is War

The original BLOOD BOWL was a rather nice little fantasy football miniatures game from those twisted blokes at Games Workshop. The premise is that, some time in the dark future, the good ol' Earth is occupied by Orcs, Elves, Dwarves, Goblins, Ratmen, and Dead Guys, in addition to Humies. Naturally, these races spend most of their time butchering each other.

In an effort to channel their aggressiveness into less destructive (and more entertaining) avenues, the races set up a BLOOD BOWL league, based upon a very poor understanding of the ancient game of American football.

In the game of BLOOD BOWL, the races still butcher each other, but they get to wear cool spiky helmets and knee-pads while doing so. The result is sort of a cross between *Warhammer 40K* (without ranged weapons) and soccer played by drunken, homicidal Australians. You win the game by scoring more points than your opponent—but it's far easier to do so if you've murdered all the opposing players first . . .

As a board-game, BLOOD BOWL was cheerful and entertaining, if not particularly deep. It wasn't a very good model of American football, lacking downs, plays, beer commercials, and so forth, but it *was* good, mindless fun. And, as always, the GW folks made really entertaining miniatures for it.

In short, BLOOD BOWL is a perfectly fine little board game, and, with care, could have been made into a perfectly fine little computer game. But, unfortunately, this hasn't happened.

The Play's the Thing . . .

When judging a simulation, the first question you must ask is, does the program recreate the thing it's simulating? That is, how well does computer BLOOD BOWL simulate the board game? The answer is, not very well.

First off, you are not allowed to set your players on the field as you would like. Instead, you must pick from a series of pre-determined bone-headed plays set up by the computer. These are displayed on a blackboard using "Xs" and "Os", which looks very nice. However, you don't know which players are occupying which position on the field. Once the play begins you might discover that your linebacker is in the backfield and your star receiver is in the center of the front line, waiting to be squished by the one of the opposition's 400-lb. gorillas. This is infuriating: it's as if, in a baseball simulation, you had to draw your team's batting order out of a hat. Since you *can* set up your players as you like in the board game, I can't figure out why they didn't let you do so in the computer game. Was is just laziness, or what?

Secondly, the artificial intelligence is, in a word, bad. I'm a singularly lousy sports-sim player, yet I won two out of the first three games I played. A friend, a dedicated BLOOD BOWL fan, played through an entire season without the opposition scoring a single point against him. This bodes ill for any long-term interest in the game.

Also, the campaign game—i.e., playing through a season—is flawed. During a game, you loose players to injuries and homicide. You can buy new players between games. In the board game, you are allowed to purchase either star players, with really hot stats, and basic all-around grunts. The computer game does not allow you to purchase grunts: you must buy the expensive super-stars. And if you have been losing games, you probably won't be

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able to afford them. Thus, if you're having a bad season, you might not be able to field a full set of players.

False Advertising
I hate to be lied to. The back-cover of the game states, clearly: "Head-to-head modem play." Cool, eh? Well, inside the box, I found a note in bright red ink: "Attention Modem Owners. MicroLeague was unable to provide the BLOOD BOWL modem play module with the enclosed version. Be sure to return the enclosed warranty registration card as all registered owners will be upgraded free of charge to the modem play version as soon as it is completed. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused."

Hmm.

Well, this reviewer suggests that potential purchasers wait until MicroLeague gets around to finishing the product before buying it. I'm sure that it'll be completed any day now . . .

Chrome
The game looks good enough, sort of. It's full of pretty pictures and cute melodies and humorous cut-screens and stuff. However, during play, you look straight down at the field, and all your players look exactly alike. You can't tell a lineman from a blitzer from a thrower. I have yet to encounter the first-person view shown in the photo on the back of the box. Oh well: perhaps they'll work on that feature after they release the version with modem-play . . .

Conclusion
A disappointment. Play the board-game: it's better. Spend your hard-earned computer-game bucks on *War Craft*, which is your basic hoot.

Say, how come I keep getting all these unfun games to review while Ken and Zeb get the cool stuff?

(Because, Paul, you are our preeminent crusty veteran computer gamer, and it takes sterner stuff to play a lame game long enough to give it a fair review—Ken.)

Inside Mac Games

Inside Mac Games Magazine
3862 Grace Lane
Glenview, IL 60025
$59 for 10-issues CD ROM subscription delivered by first-class mail
E-mail: eWorld: Tuncer; America Online: IMGames; CompuServe: 71554,2761; Internet: Tuncer@mcs.com Requirements: Macintosh with CD ROM drive.

For $60 a year, you Macintosh game fans can get a monthly CD full of cool and not-so-cool games delivered right to your door. *Inside Mac Games* is a great deal, and a fountain of gaming fun.

The CD Magazine
This is the competent, useful, if somewhat unexciting central component of the *Inside Mac Games* CD—a monthly magazine for the Macintosh game fan. *IMG* articles are competent and serviceable, with no distinctive voices, styles, or viewpoints. The reviews identify hot gaming prospects and lame disappointments; scan the screen shots illustrations and evaluation summaries as a quick shopping guide for your Mac gaming dollar. Slides shows, Quicktime movies, and playable demos let you look before you buy.

Commercial and Shareware Demos
Here's the real charm and value of the *IMG* CD. Now I can get all the first-person, texture-mapped shooter action I need from playing the free demos from the *IMG* CD. For example, the March issue demos include: shooters like *Marathon, Sensory Overload, Pathways in Darkness, Castle Wolfenstein*; flight sims like *Out of the Sun, A-10, SuperWing Commander;* action-adventure games like *Frankenstein, Alone in the Dark, Flashback;* sports games like *Playmaker Football* and *Links Pro,* and miscellaneous others like *Troubled Souls, Tubular Worlds,* and *Loony Labyrinth.*

Shareware and Freeware
Mac gamers are in for a big surprise in this department. The quantity and quality of Mac game shareware and freeware is remarkable, and the convenience of having them delivered in bulk on a CD every month makes playing with them even more fun. The March issue has 28 shareware and freeware games. My favorites were *Netherworld* (a real fun shoot-'em-up arcade), *Ants Afire* (roast ants with a magnifying glass and listen to them squeal!), and *Realmz* (a conventional but good-looking computer RPG).

Each issue also includes a variety of game-related files: FAQs ("frequently asked questions"—good sources of gameplay and strategy tips, annotated maps, cheat codes, etc.), walkthrus (guided tours through adventure games), and scenarios (i.e., home-brewed *Wolfenstein* levels). When I briefly became a *Marathon* freak, the maps and game hints I found on the CD both saved me from frustration and fed my fannish frothing frenzy.

Evaluation
The magazine component: Since there's no other Mac gaming magazine worth mentioning, Mac game fans need *Inside Mac Games* to separate the wheat from the chaff. *The demos and shareware:* a barrel of fun and a solid value; a broad review of commercial Mac games products, a treasure chest of playable demos, and an invaluable collection of cool freeware and shareware games.

Note: A free "Preview" edition of *Inside Mac Games* is available from various online services and other network sources. This is a condensed version of the magazine with fewer articles and reviews, and none of the demos, freeware, or shareware. If you don't have a CD ROM drive, you can at least follow the Mac game hobby through this "Preview" edition.

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ARCANE LORE

Speed of Wind, Strength of Wave

SEA MAGIC

by Deborah Christian

Artwork by David Day

Most land-based adventures assume a setting in which magic is a familiar and even commonplace element. But what is magic's counterpart when adventuring at sea? The answer is sea magic. Whether characters are traveling to a foreign port, en route to an adventure under the waves, or leading a naval force against invaders, magic at sea—as on land—can have a profound effect on the adventure and the flavor of the setting.

Imagine this scenario:

Your lastest quest is a success. Among your other rewards, a grateful nobleman lends you a ship and a naval escort to see you safely through pirate-infested waters. The voyage goes well—until a waterspout comes over the horizon, heading directly for your ship. Mutters from the crew let you know this is no ordinary danger, but a spell cast by a mage in league with the pirates.

Suddenly, before the waterspout endangers your ship, you hear a shout from the quarterdeck—a sea wizard on duty with the crew raises a hurricane wind to counteract the watery tornado. As violent gusts whip stinging salt water into your eyes, one magical wind battles another until both are dissipated. The pirates, now clearly visible, realize their ploy failed, leaving your ship and escorts undamaged. The buccaneers turn and flee.

An uncountered waterspout could have turned this adventure into a shipwreck-and-captivity scenario rather quickly. Yet in cultures where magic is a tool used by the powerful, it makes sense to apply it to one's advantage at sea, to aid mariners in their day-to-day work and for both offense and defense in times of war. This article explores how magic may be used at sea, and the impact it has on adventures that take place above the ocean waters.

Who Uses Sea Magic?

The term "sea magic" refers to magic cast at sea and above the waves. More specifically, it refers to spells developed especially for use at sea, often manipulating natural elements to accomplish their goal. A spell-caster need not be the only source of sea magic aboard ship, for these enchantments can also be a permanent or temporary dweomers cast on a ship or crew, or magical devices charged to duplicate spell effects.

Adventurers used to working in small parties may naturally think of their group's spell-caster as the party member most likely to use sea magic. This may be true, but there is another, larger scale to consider when dealing with the wider influence of magic at sea. The regular use of spells and the employment of spell-casters can be a costly undertaking. The people and organizations which support the sea mages are fairly easy to identify: they are groups with the resources and the need for magic at sea.

Foremost among these patrons are naval forces, such as a nation's navy or a group of pirates. They employ offense, defense, and utility magic. Merchantmen are the second largest users of such magic. Guilds and traders who own fleets have the resources necessary for such magic, and the rich cargos that warrant such protection. A third group consists of wealthy individuals—noblemen, adventurers, and so on—who have the personal resources to pay for enchantments on a private vessel. Finally, devout worshipers and others who have the favor of sea gods and their temples can benefit from the sea magic practiced by specialty priests.

Fishermen, coastal traders, and the sailors of small craft may also use sea magic, but unless they are affiliated with one of the patrons mentioned above, their magic is minimal and probably represents quite a splurge on the shipowner's part. In certain societies this may account for a large part of magic seen at sea, especially in the most utilitarian forms. Practical enchantments can include running lights bespelled with *continual light*, anchor capstans and ship fittings reliably lubricated with a permanent *grease* spell, spells that act as navigational aids, and similar *mundane applications*.

The DM must determine which other societies or groups in his campaign frequently use enchantments at sea. For instance, temples of sea gods almost certainly do so in pursuit of their own goals, not just to help favored followers; other

likely groups are sea elves or islanders whose life centers on the sea. These folk may use sea magic in their everyday ventures upon the waters.

To serve these needs, priests and wizards may specialize in sea magic. These specialists are commonly found in sea ports and fishing villages, and at sea aboard the vessels they assist. Guidelines for developing these specialists are given under the "Sea Magic Specialists" heading below.

Types of Sea Magic

The body of arcana known as sea magic

Spells at Sea

The following examples illustrate how specialist spell-casters are likely to use magic at sea. Of course, nonspecialist priests and wizards may use the same tactics to aid seafarers or during seaborne combat. However, specialists can cast some traditional spells in untraditional ways, as explained under the notes for *protection from fire* and *passwall.* Full descriptions of new spells follow these notes, but to maintain game balance, limit their use to specialists alone.

Spells affecting animals (such as *animal summoning* or *conjure animals*) are limited to creatures which are found on shores or at sea (fish, seagulls, ship's rats, etc.). Fire can be conjured by sea magic specialists, but such spells are confined to shipboard attacks and defenses, and do not function on land. See character class descriptions for additional restrictions.

Bind (W2): Cast on enemy decks and ropes to hinder crew; aids in emergency repair aboard friendly ships

Conjure animals (W6): Summoned creatures can attack enemy crew, for example rats in the rigging or poisonous spiders below decks.

Continual light (W2, P3): Bespells navigation buoys, running lights, and provides light for work on board ship or lighthouses.

Darkness, 15′ (W2): When ships are within range, this is cast on the enemy helm to confuse helmsman and commanding officers.

Detect snares & pits (P1): Can detect the trough created by a *part water* ahead of the caster's vessel.

Dimension door (W4): Favored by spell-casters who must move quickly around ship during combat, when vantage point may be critical.

**Elemental control* (W4, P4): Wrests control of an elemental from the summoning spell-caster, in the same way that the turning undead ability does for evil priests seeking to command the undead.

Enlarge (W1): Cast on critical lines, helm, or other mechanisms on board an enemy ship to disable steering or drop sails.

Fabricate (W5): Creates items for emergency repairs, such as making planking out of barrel staves, rope out of string, etc.

**Fireproof* (W2)—Cast on single items, usually sails; of limited duration. Prevents ordinary fires, and provides a saving throw against magical fire.

Grease (W1)—With *permanence,* this spell is often used to grease shipboard mechanisms like the anchor capstan or bilge pumps. Can very effectively hinder enemy crew in combat on shifting decks.

Hold portal (W1): Cast from a distance, this spell can bar enemy gangways, hatches, or deckhouse doors to hinder crew movement.

**Hold wave* (P4): Stops normal ocean wave motion in a 20′ × 20′ area; used to save drowning men, fish cargo or wreckage out of storm-tossed seas, etc.

Invisibility, 10′ radius (W3): Cast on friendly noncombatants (helmsman, officers shouting orders) to lessen the chance of hostile spell-casters targeting them for attack.

Invisibility to animals (P1): Safeguard key individuals from the attacks of small summoned animals (such as ship's rats).

**Ironwood* (W3): Strengthens structures and wooden parts (double normal dmg capacity), gives saving throw against the effects of *warp wood.* Cast on entire ship for short duration, or parts for longer duration.

Item (W3): Often used to shrink nonmagical fires. When ships have closed, a spell-caster tosses the *item* to the deck of the enemy ship where it returns to its normal state.

Knock (W2): Counters *hold portal* attacks, which can trap crew or invaders below decks.

Levitate (W2): Used to manipulate cargo.

Mass invisibility (W7): Conceals the true number of sailors or boarders on a ship's deck.

Mending (W1): Popular for repairing tears in canvas sails and frayed or split lines.

Messenger (P2): Ship's rats and sea gulls are commonly used as messengers.

Monster summoning I (W3): Conjures up 2d4 shipboard rats for most casters. Sea magic specialists may choose one of the following instead: barracuda (1 HD), common lamprey, merman, sea otter, piranha (3d4), or black urchin.

Monster summoning II (W4): Conjures 1d6 monsters such as barracuda (2 HD), dolphin, locathah, ixitxachitl ray, sting ray, sea horse, lesser seawolf, green urchin.

Monster summoning III (W5): Conjures 1d4 monsters such as barracuda (3 HD), giant crab, ghoul lacedon, sahuagin, selkie, or red urchin.

Monster summoning IV (W6): Calls 1d3 monsters such as hippocampus, gargoyle kapoachinth, giant lobster, ogre merrow, giant otter, shark (3–5 HD), triton, or yellow urchin.

Monster summoning V (W7): Calls 1–2 monsters such as giant crocodile, sea lamprey, scrag, sea lion, shark (5–6 HD), giant marine spider, water weird, silver urchin.

Monster summoning VI (W8): 1d3 monsters such as marine eel, narwhal, octopus, greater seawolf, shark (7–8 HD), giant sea snake (8 HD).

Monster summoning VII (W9): 1–2 monsters such as manta ray, giant sea slug, giant sea snake (10 HD), giant squid.

Monster summoning VIII (W10): 1–2 monsters such as whale, kraken, giant sea turtle, vodanyoi, morkoth.

Move earth (W6): In combination with a *transmute rock to mud* spell, *move earth* can rearrange ballast if ship has been unbalanced by storm-tossed waves. This might be the only thing that prevents a vessel from capsizing in extreme seas. Add +15% to seaworthiness for ships carrying ballast.

Part water (P6, W6): In when cast in combat, this spell creates a ship trap at sea ahead of an oncoming vessel.

Passwall (W5): After two ships have closed and their hulls are bound together with grappling lines, this spell can allow a surprise boarding action below decks, permitting crewmen to pass through both hulls above the waterline.

Protection from evil (W1, P1): Shields one creature from uncontrolled elementals.

**Protection from fire* (P3): As specialist spell, extends its effect to inanimate objects, as noted under specialist spell description.

Protection from normal missiles (W3): Useful for commanding officers. Sea magic specialists can cast this spell on inanimate objects; they most often use it to protect sails.

Reverse gravity (W7): Can clear enemy decks of crew. When the victims fall back to earth, their ship has usually moved out from under them, so they land in the ocean, where they can be scooped out later as prisoners. Sometimes cast when boarders are coming over the rails; in their initial rush, many of them are swept instantly out of combat.

**Sea form* (P4): Turns target into a coherent liquid form, which moves like ooze. The recipient of a *sea form* spell can resume normal shape at will.

**Sea mount* (P6): Summons one sea creature to ride, or if a suitable one is already present, tames it. Carries rider on the surface of the waves.

**Speak with sea creatures* (P2): Allows communication with sea dwellers.

Spider climb (W1): Allows crewmen to climb the outside of a hull and sneak aboard enemy ships. Also useful for effecting difficult repairs in damaged rigging.

**Surf* (P3): Aggravates the natural wave action on a beach until a crashing surf rolls in. Ideally, the spell catches people unawares or hinders boats moving to and from the beach.

Summon swarm (W2): Cast aboard an enemy ship, this spell draws the ship's rats to attack. This distraction is usually targeted at enemy spell-casters and commanding officers.

**Swim* (P2): May save crew lives when abandoning ship.

Transmute rock to mud (W5): Simplifies rearranging a ship's ballast. The reverse restores the mud to dirt and the dirt to rock.

Transmute water to dust (P6, W6): The reverse can replenish water supplies while at sea.

**Tsunami* (W9): The tidal wave that can be directed against hostile shorelines or enemy fleets.

Vanish (W7): Removes useful objects from an enemy deck (tiller, anchor, etc.).

Veil (W6): Cloaks small vessels or hides armament or soldiers to mislead the enemy.

Wall of ice (W4): A popular disabling attack when directed at parts of enemy ship; hinders crew if cast horizontally on a deck.

Wall of iron (W5): When cast on the side of a boat heeling over before the wind, the sudden extra weight may be enough to capsize a vessel.

Warp wood (P2): Ineffective against *ironwood*-bespelled wood.

Water breathing (W3, P3): Helps crewmen who must enter the water; usually reserved for nonswimmers who abandon ship, or persons making hull repairs under water.

Water walk (P5, W5): Sea priest specialists only, as the wizard spell.

Web (W2): Cast in enemy rigging or on decks to hinder crew movement.

**Waterspout* (W8): Creates a waterspout, with all the hazards of sea-borne tornado.

Whispering wind (W2): Permits communication between friendly ships.

**Wood rot* (W6): Destroys ship's planking.

includes some customized enchantments but relies mainly on traditional spells. The power of sea magic lies not in its uniqueness, but rather in the useful adaptation of land-based spells to serve under seafaring conditions. Conjuring air and water elementals on an everyday basis is more common than for land-dwelling spell-casters; destructive elements like fire are used with surprising frequency at sea, although limited to attacks against enemy ships. Spells to aid mariners in their daily tasks are most popular: a sea wizard might have a ready store of *mending* spells memorized to repair rope and sail, *levitate* to help load cargos, and the specialist spell *compass* to help the ship's captain navigate.

Sea magic falls into three categories: offensive, defensive, and utilitarian. These categories are described below. Further tips for the use of specific spells in sea encounters are given in the "Spells at Sea" sidebar.

Offensive Magic

Offensive magic is a crucial component of attacks by sea-faring aggressors such as pirates and naval forces. Merchant craft may use offensive magic to fight off attackers, as might small craft and fishermen in monster-infested waters. Many spells used for combat on land can serve the same purpose at sea, although often limited by weather or range. Other spells have been developed or refined especially for use at sea by wizards and priests who specialize in sea magic.

Tactics: These spells are almost always cast in the heat of a sea battle. A spell-caster's vantage point can be critical, for sea mages are often found in the rigging, or standing near the captain to heed his orders and counter magical threats as they arise. Offensive magic typically seeks to do one of three things: to hinder enemy movement, to disable an enemy vessel, or to destroy an enemy vessel.

Movement can be hindered by raising contrary winds and waters or by reducing visibility with rain or fog. Crewmen cannot handle their ship effectively if *web, slow, stinking cloud,* or *solid fog* spells impair their movement. If attackers plan to close with a target vessel for a boarding action, these spells may obstruct and confuse the defenders, improving the odds of the boarding action's success.

Ships can be quickly disabled by structural damage, and most offensive spells are perfectly suited to the task, from the overt force of a *lightning bolt* or *fireball,* to the more subtle attack of *warp wood* or *produce flame* cast on sails. If attackers want to keep a ship functional for later use, irreparable damage may be undesirable. In that case, several spells can temporarily disable a ship by freezing control mechanisms in place. For instance, a *wall of ice* can immobilize rigging needed to control the sails, or a *vanish* spell could make the rudder disappear.

When the attacker's sole purpose is to destroy the enemy, devastating magical attacks are straightforward: for instance, a *lightning bolt* striking at the water line can breach the hull and sink a ship, or a summoned elemental can wreak havoc among structure and crew. Fire attacks are particularly damaging among the tarred ropes and dry timbers of a ship, and once out of control can quickly burn a vessel down to the waterline. The destructive potential of an attack should be carefully weighed, for the difference between disabling a vessel and destroying it is sometimes no more than the variations in a roll of the dice.

Defensive Magic

Defensive magic can passively protect a vessel or can actively turn aside a threat; naturally, ships expecting combat are the ones most heavily protected. Merchantmen seek to protect their rich cargos, and more commonplace craft may need protection from specific seaborne hazards if they travel in dangerous waters.

Tactics: Passive defenses can ward a ship from common hazards at sea, and from dangers which threaten the entire ship.

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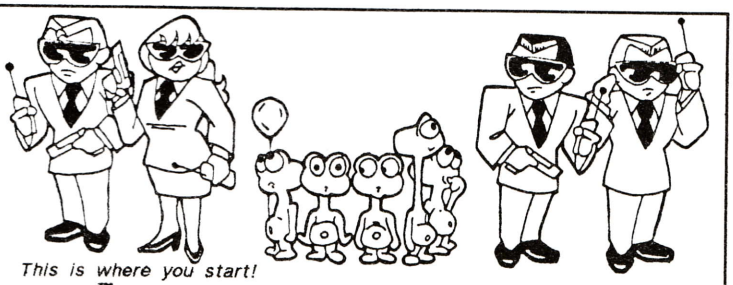

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For the most part, these expensive permanent dweomers are bought from sea magic specialists and are cast on the vessel while in port. Popular spells include spells that bolster the strength of the hull or improve resistance to worms and barnacles (their benefits are noted below under "Specialist Spells"). *Protection from normal missiles* can guard sails and hull from damage.

Active defenses directly counter a magical attack or avoid an immediate hazard. For example, weather magic may conceal movement from enemy eyes—especially useful when a ship evades pursuit. Spells resulting in a deluge of rain or ice can squelch onboard fires; heat-related spells can counter icy magical attacks; *straighten wood* can undo an enemy's *warp wood* attack. Calling on elementals can save an endangered ship, especially when threatened by natural hazards like sea monsters, storms, or reefs.

Sea Magic Spells

Use this table to decide what spells should be made available to a sea priest or wizard. The table includes spells from the *Player's Handbook*, as well as new specialist spells described below (marked with an *). The DM may add other spells to this list, but the list provides the basics that should be available for characters who specialize in sea magic. Notes on how specialists use these spells are given below.

Sea Priest Spells

Many sea magic spells do not fall into the spheres allowed to sea priests (for example, *warp wood*, from the Plant sphere, is unavailable to sea priests). As long as a particular spell is listed on the sea magic list, however, it is available to these specialists, with the limitations noted under the spell descriptions.

Level 1
Bless
Create water
Detect snares & pits
Endure cold/heat
Faerie fire
Invisibility to animals
Protection from evil
Purify food & drink

Level 2
Dust devil
Obscurement
Produce flame
Resist fire/cold
*Speak with sea creatures
*Swim
Trip

Level 3
Call lightning
Continual light
Create food & water
Dispel magic
Flame walk
Hold animal
*Protection from fire
*Surf
Water breathing
Water walk
*Home port

Level 4
Abjure
Animal summoning I
Control temperature, 10′ rad.
*Elemental turning
Free action
*Hold wave
Lower water
Produce fire
Protection from evil, 10′ radius
Protection from lightning
*Sea form

Level 5
Air walk
Animal growth
Animal summoning II
Atonement
Control winds
Flame strike
Rainbow
Water walk
Wall of fire

Level 6
Aerial servant
Animal summoning III
Animate object
Anti-animal shell
Conjure animals
Part water
*Sea mount
Transmute water to dust
Weather summoning

Level 7
Animate rock
*Conjure water elemental
Control weather
Fire storm
Gate
Wind walk

Sea Wizard Spells

Level 1
Affect normal fires
Burning hands
Enlarge
Grease
Hold portal
Hypnotism
Mending
Phantasmal force
Protection from evil
Shield
Sleep
Spider climb
Taunt
Wall of fog
*Compass

Level 2
Bind
Continual light
Darkness 15′
Fog cloud
*Fireproof
Flaming sphere
Improved phantasmal force
Knock
Levitate
Melf's acid arrow
Stinking cloud
Web
Whispering wind
Summon swarm

Level 3
Dispel magic
Fireball
Flame arrow
Gust of wind
Haste
Invisibility, 10′
*Ironwood
Item
Lightning bolt
Melf's minute meteors
Monster summoning I
Protection from evil 10′
Protection from normal missiles
Spectral force
Water breathing

Level 4
Charm monster
Confusion
Dimension door
*Elemental control
Evard's black tentacles
Fear
Fire charm
Fire shield
Ice storm
Monster summoning II
Solid fog
Wall of fire
Wall of ice
Conjure elemental
Wind wall

Level 5
Airy water
Bigby's interposing hand
Cloudkill
Cone of cold
Dismissal
Fabricate
Major creation
Monster summoning III
Passwall
Transmute rock to mud
Wall of force
Wall of iron

Level 6
Bigby's forceful hand
Chain lightning
Conjure animals
Control weather
Death fog
Lower Water
Monster summoning IV
Part water
Transmute water to dust
Enchant an item
*Wood rot

Level 7
Banishment
Bigby's grasping hand
Delayed blast fireball
Mass invisibility
Monster summoning V
*Summon wind

Level 8
Bigby's clenched fist
Incendiary cloud
Monster summoning VI
Permanency
*Waterspout
Vanish

Level 9
Bigby's crushing hand
Gate
Meteor swarm
Monster summoning VII
*Tsunami

Utility Magic

Utility magic is the body of spells used for practical purposes, to simplify day-to-day chores on board ship. Utility spells are most often found when it is more economical in the long run to use magic for the job, or when an enchantment is essential to the ship's performance under pressure. Rich ship owners who can afford "frivolous" magic may also indulge in utilitarian spells.

Tactics: Most utility spells are dull but quite helpful. Running lights illuminated by *continual light* need not be refueled during storms; a *levitate* spell can expedite the unloading of a cargo and ensure that goods arrive at market before the competition.

At other times, practical spells gain critical importance. During combat or storms, for example, the loss of sails can be fatal; similarly, cargo that breaks loose from its lashings during a storm-tossed voyage can endanger ship and crew alike. In cases like this, having the right magic on hand could mean the difference between safety and danger, if not life and death. A *mending* spell could repair torn sails to keep a ship turned into the waves of a great gale, a *strength* spell could allow a helmsman to keep a steady course in rough seas, or a *water breathing* spell cast on sailors who must abandon ship in a storm could save those who would otherwise be dragged to a cold death at the bottom of the sea.

Sea Magic Specialists

Priests

Priests dedicated to ocean deities can specialize as sea priests, much as priests of nature gods can become druids. Sea priests gain spells that aid sea-faring folk, particularly those noted in the spell lists below. Specialist sea priests are commonly found in busy sea ports, occasionally in small fishing villages. They minister to seafarers and their families and bless the ships of their followers with magic. For example, a ship master who makes a generous donation to the temple may in turn have his vessel blessed with an *ironwood* spell, as a token of the sea god's protection. If the sea priest is an adventurer, he may serve aboard his country's naval vessels. Because of their higher calling, sea priests are seldom employed by private individuals. As a result, their magic is encountered less often aboard merchantmen and private ships.

The following guidelines are suggested for specialty sea priests in a campaign:

Deity: any sea god. Wind and weather gods also possible, at DM's discretion.

Requirements: Wisdom 12.

Weapons allowed: Harpoon, barbed spear, net, or other weapon specially favored by the deity.

Armor Allowed: Nothing heavier than studded leather, to permit swimming.

Major Spheres: All, Elemental, Weather, Summoning.

Minor Spheres: Protection, Animal, Healing.

Magical Items Allowed: Any item designed to manipulate sea magic; otherwise, as a normal cleric.

Granted Powers

Sea priests gain the following benefits and limitations:

- Sea priests cannot turn undead.
- Sea priests automatically gain the swimming nonweapon proficiency or secondary skill. If in danger of drowning, their god grants them the ability to *breath water* (as the spell) until the danger passes.
- Sea priests gain a +2 bonus to all saving throws against the attack of air or water elementals and elemental-kin, including whirlwinds, nereid venom, sylph spells, and water kin's drowning attacks.
- At 7th level, a sea priest gains the ability to summon an 8-HD air elemental once per week.
- At 10th level, a sea priest can summon a 12-HD water elemental once per week.

The following limitations apply to sea priest spheres:

Animal spells apply only to sea- and shore-dwelling creatures or animals (shipboard rats, sea gulls, pelicans, whales, etc.). *Animal summoning* cast at sea, for instance, can call forth the same creatures noted under the sea wizard's *monster summoning* spells.

A sea priest cannot magically manipulate earth or fire, except insofar as those elements are encountered on board ship, on a dock, or at any other location on the shore or on the sea. For example, a sea priest can attack a ship with magical fire but could not kindle a flame ashore in a warehouse.

Wizards

To master sea magic, a wizard must have a wide body of knowledge. Sea magic draws its spells from many sources in other schools: abjuration, conjuration, enchantments, illusions, or alteration. All sea wizards concentrate on learning spells noted in the lists below. Note that sea mages and water elementalists are fierce rivals; sea mages consider their school of magic superior because it does not rely on only a single source of power. Sea mages draw their magical powers from wind, wave, water, sun, moon, storms, and the thousand forms of sea creatures.

Sea wizards are solitary practitioners of their art, and may be found anywhere near or on the sea. They work for hire, though occasionally they are retained by patrons who have the resources to support their specialized magical practice. The following guidelines are suggested for specialty sea wizards in a campaign:

Requirements: Intelligence 12, Wis 12.

Weapons allowed: Staff, dagger, darts, knife.

Armor Allowed: None.

Magical Items Allowed: Any item designed to manipulate sea magic; otherwise, as a normal wizard.

Special Abilities

Sea mages gain the following benefits:

- Specialist spell-casters gain one additional spell per level. This spell must be learned from the sea magic lists.
- Sea wizards gain a +1 to saving throws vs. spells cast by other sea wizards. In addition, the targets of a sea wizard's magic suffer a −2 saving throw penalty, as the targets of other specialist wizards do.
- The wizard gains no bonus to his chance to learn sea magic spells.
- Specialists do not automatically gain sea magic spells when advancing in level but may research and create new sea magic spells with greater ease than other spells (treat as one level lower for determining difficulty).

Also, like sea priests, sea wizards cannot manipulate earth and fire except when aboard ship or on the sea shore.

New Spells

Practitioners of sea magic have access to a number of unique spells, though these spells all fit into the traditional schools and spheres of magic. Players and DMs may also want to consult the *Arabian Adventures* rulebook for spells from the provinces of sea and wind that may further enhance sea mages.

Sea Priest Magic

Conjure water elemental
(Conjuration/Summoning) Reversible
This spell is identical to the 6th-level priest spell, *conjure fire elemental,* but it brings forth water creatures. Each casting has a 65% chance of calling up a 12-HD elemental, a 20% chance of a 16-HD elemental, 9% chance of 2–4 water weirds, 4% chance of a marid, and a 2% chance of a 21–24 HD noble water elemental.

Elemental control (Abjuration)
Sphere: Summoning
Level: 4 Components: V, S
Range: 10 yds. + 1/lvl CT: 1 rnd.
Duration: Special Save: Special
Area of Effect: 1 creature

This spell allows the caster to seize control of an elemental summoned by someone else. The priest has a 50% base chance of success; the roll is adjusted by the difference in level or Hit Dice between the cleric and the creature he seeks to control. This roll is further modified by the difference between the original summoner's Wisdom

and the caster's: the difference between the two is a bonus added to whomever has the greater Wisdom.

Only one attempt may be made per creature; if the priest does not seize control of the elemental, no future efforts will succeed. If the effort is successful, the elemental obeys the wishes of the priest for the remainder of its stay on the physical plane.

Hold wave (Evocation)
Sphere: Elemental
Level: 4 Components: V, S
Range: 10 yards CT: 6
Duration: 1 t. + 1/lvl Save: Special
Area of Effect: 20′ × 10′ area

This spell immobilizes normal wave motion in a 20′ × 20′ area. It stills the waters, permitting drowning sailors, lost cargo, or other items to be fished out of heavy seas. When cast during a heavy chop, the ocean within the area of effect becomes as still as pond water; if seas are heavier than this (as during a violent storm), the wave action is reduced to a heavy chop.

If the sea is agitated by an elemental or hostile magic, *hold wave* fails unless the spell-caster makes a saving throw vs. spell. If the seas are already affected by *hold wave*, the hostile spell-caster or elemental must make a saving throw to disrupt the magically-calmed waves.

Home port (Evocation)
Sphere: All
Level: 3 Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch CT: 10 rounds
Duration: 1 week/lvl Save: None
Area of Effect: One creature

This spell bestows unerring "homing" sense on a person, so that individual knows how to take the vessel back to its home port, regardless of how far off-course the ship may have been blown by storm or happenstance. The home port is where the ship was launched, or the place it returns to berth most often. This spell cannot be modified to home in on an intervening port of call.

The material component is a pebble from the vessel's native port, which must be held by the spell recipient. The rock is not consumed in spell-casting.

Protection from fire (Abjuration)
This spell is identical to the 3rd-level priest spell *protection from fire*. However, a sea priest can cast this spell on inanimate objects, such as a ship's hull or sails. When cast on objects, its duration is one hour, plus one turn per level.

Sea form (Alteration)
Sphere: All
Level: 4 Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch CT: 6
Duration: 6 t. + 1/lvl Save: Negates
Area of Effect: One creature

When this spell is cast, the person touched is transformed into a coherent liquid form. At a glance, the recipient looks like ordinary seawater, but the sea form stays together like ooze and can flow up walls. The sea form has a Movement Rate of 3. The spell is typically used to infiltrate an enemy ship, flowing up over the side like water, then slipping down closed hatches and beneath doorways. When the sea form is submerged in a greater body of water it has a neutral buoyancy, and can float or sink at will.

Normal shape can be resumed at will. The person affected by this spell shifts into the sea form without clothes or weapons, and resumes normal shape in the same condition. The material component is a mouthful of seawater, swallowed by the spell recipient.

Sea Mount (Conjuration/Summoning)
Sphere: Summoning
Level: 6 Components: V, S
Range: Special CT: 6
Duration: Special Save: Neg.
Area of Effect: One sea creature

When this spell is cast, a sea creature large enough to ride is summoned to the caster, if one is present within an hour's swim. Therefore, the summons may not be answered until an hour has passed and the creature has had a chance to arrive. Typical sea mounts include giant fish, sea horses, sea turtles, and nonmagical creatures like rays and dolphins. Even sharks may respond, and for the duration their natural predatory urges will be kept in check. The summoned creature can bear one person at the surface of the waves, and can carry the rider a variable distance depending on its reaction to the summons (see below).

When the spell is cast, the sea priest must picture where he wants the creature to go. Since this spell does not bestow the ability to communicate with sea creatures, only the mental picture provides direction to the sea mount. The DM should make a reaction roll: if friendly, the creature carries its rider to the nearest shore, no matter how distant. If unfriendly, it carries the person to somewhere near, and abandons its rider as soon as possible. A creature that makes its saving throw may either ignore the summons, or may deliver the rider to a destination of its own choosing.

Speak with sea creatures (Alteration)
Identical to the 2nd-level priest spell *speak with animals*, though this spell permits communication only with sea dwellers.

Surf (Alteration)
Sphere: Elemental
Level: 3 Components: V, S
Range: 30 yds. CT: 4
Duration: 1 t. + 1/lvl Save: None
Area of Effect: 10 yds beachfront/lvl

This spell aggravates the natural wave action on a beach so that higher and higher waves rush ashore until a violent crashing surf rolls in. It can catch people unaware or hinder boats moving to and from the beach. At its most violent, surf can damage or destroy beachfront structures and docks. Once the wave action begins, the spell-caster himself must move away from the surf, for the longer the spell lasts, the more violent the resulting wave action will be. For its first turn of duration, the surf rushes up to its normal high-water mark. For every turn past that, the surf advances a further 10 yards inland. Surf raised by a 6th-level sea priest, for instance, will wet the shore a distance of 60 yards from the normal high-water mark.

Swim (Enchantment/Charm)
Sphere: Charm
Level: 2 Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch CT: 1
Dur.: 1 hour + 1/lvl Save: None
Area of Effect: 1 creature/lvl

This spell gives an untrained swimmer the ability to swim as if proficient, with all chances for success detailed in the *PHB* (pages 120–121). If cast on a proficient swimmer, the recipient swims with a +2 Constitution for purposes of determining his success. The material component is a small pumice stone for each recipient.

Sea Wizard Magic

Compass (Evocation)(W1)
Level: 1 Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch CT: 4
Dur.: 7 days + 1/lvl Save: None
Area of Effect: Special

This spell enchants a special device so that it always points in a direction defined by the caster. This is often a map direction, but it can be more abstract: the compass may always point to their home port, or their destination, for example. The caster can choose only a familiar direction, such as a place he has seen or a direction he is certain of.

The spell's material component is a brass bowl filled with water, with a circle of cork set afloat in it. Atop the cork is affixed a long iron pin or needle, painted red on the pointing end. When the spell is cast, the cork stays centered in the bowl and rotates until the pointer aims in the direction defined by the caster.

In calm weather the compass is easy to read, but in rough waters the float bobs about enough that reading properly the compass requires a successful Intelligence ability check; if the check fails, the read is off by 20° to 180°. If all the water is drained from the bowl or the cork is re-

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moved, the spell is broken. For this reason, the compass often is covered with glass to keep water and float in place.

Elemental turning (Abjuration, Summoning)
This spell is identical to the 4th-level priest spell.

Fireproof (Abjuration)
Level: 2 Components: V, S, M
Range: 5 yds/lvl CT: 2
Dur.: 1 t. + 1/lvl. Save: None
Area of Effect: 10 yd. rad. +5/lvl.

This spell is cast on items within the spell radius to protect them from ordinary fires. Only one type of item can be protected, and that type must be named when the spell is cast: masts, for instance, or sails. If the spell-caster seeks to protect two things at the same time, two separate *fireproof* spells must be cast. The spell prevents ignition by normal fires, and bestows a saving throw against the effects of magical fire. If the saving throw is successful, the fire does not burn; if failed, half the normal damage is inflicted. The material component is a dash of baking soda.

Ironwood (Alteration)
Level: 3 Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch CT: 6
Dur.: 1 hour +1/lvl. Save: None
Area of Effect: 2′ × 2′ × 2′ of wood

Ironwood temporarily lends the strength of iron to the common wood used in a ship. This spell is most often used to reinforce the planking of a hull, and sometimes to brace spars and masts. Although the wood gains in strength, it becomes no more heavy. The 8-cubic-foot area of effect can protect an area of hull nearly 2′ wide by 4′ long. A sixth-level sea wizard, for instance, could make an almost 6 × 8 area iron-strong, or a 4′ × 12′ one. Thus vulnerable areas near the waterline can be protected, or the prow reinforced if ramming is expected to take place. Ironwood doubles the normal damage capacity against impact, stress, and fire. Wood bespelled in this manner gains a saving throw against the effects of *warp wood*. The material components are a spike of iron and the dust of one small diamond of 500 gp value, consumed in spell-casting. It is also possible to make this spell permanent.

Sea Mage Magic
Protection From normal missiles (Abjuration)
This spell is identical to the PHB version. When sea wizards learn it, it can also be cast on inanimate objects, such as sails.

Summon wind (Conjuration/Summoning)
Level: 7 Components: V, S, M
Range: Special CT: 1 turn
Duration: Special Save: None
Area of Effect: One ship

With this spell the sea wizard calls up a steady wind to fill his sails and blow the ship in a desired direction. The wind never blows harder than required for a moderate rate of travel, but it is completely reliable for as long as it lasts. It is unaffected by prevailing winds. To cast this spell, the wizard must know the true name of a wind elemental, whose help he calls upon to direct the magical winds. If the same elemental has been called previously, there is a 5% cumulative chance per summoning that the elemental refuses to serve. If this happens, the elemental arrives, but is uncontrollable.

Once the spell is successfully cast, the duration of the resulting wind must be determined. First, make an Intelligence ability check. If it fails, the wind blows for one hour and then dies out. If the check succeeds, the wind lasts all day or until dismissed by the wizard. For each day of sailing, another Intelligence check must be made. When the check fails, the wind ceases. The wizard may do other spell-casting while the wind blows, but once it stops it does not start again unless magically summoned once more.

The material component is a flask of air captured and sealed in a bottle on the plane of elemental Air. The spell takes effect when the bottle is opened and the air released.

Tsunami (Evocation)
Level: 9 Components: V, S
Range: Special CT: 1 turn
Duration: Special Save: None
Area of Effect: Special

When this spell is cast, an underwater earthquake is generated that in turn creates a gigantic wave. The wave is high, fast-moving, and is most destructive when it washes over a shoreline, swamping everything in its path as it roars inland. *Tsunami* can be cast anywhere but is dangerous to the caster unless cast at sea in deep waters. The first effect of this spell is identical to the *earthquake* spell, centered beneath the sea wizard's feet and spreading in a line in the direction he wishes the tsunami to follow. If cast in deep waters, the vessel tosses and heaves a bit, but does not endanger anyone. In water less than 50 yards deep, a sailing proficiency check is required for the ship's master and crew to maintain control of their vessel amid the suddenly heaving waves.

A tsunami is most effective when cast approximately 1/2–1 mile offshore. At that range it is ruinous along a 1-mile broad beachfront, devastating structures along the shore where it hits and destroying everything for 1/8 mile inland. The next 1/4 mile inland suffers heavy flooding. Saving throws vs. spells are required for persons caught in the 1/8 mile danger zone to escape with their lives, or for structures to survive the giant wave. Within the 1/4 mile flood zone, roll d% to determine how much damage is done to buildings, and allow persons to try to swim or run to safety.

If the tsunami is triggered closer to shore, it attacks half as much beachfront (1/2 mile broad); if triggered farther out to sea, it hits 2–3 miles of beachfront. In either of these instances, however, the tsunami has either dissipated some of its violence, or not had enough room to develop heavy wave action. In such cases, there is no 1/8 mile danger zone along the coast. Waters rush only 1/4 mile inland; flood damage and human endangerment are treated as in the 1/4 mile inland zone described above.

Waterspout (Conjuration/Summoning)
Level: 8 Components: V, S
Range: 100 yds + 10/lvl CT: 6
Duration: 1 t. + 1/lvl. Save: None
Area of Effect: 10 yd. radius

When this spell is cast, a tornado forms at the surface of the water. The resulting waterspout is 10′ high for every level of the caster. If the spell-caster wishes, the waterspout can be shorter than this maximum, decreasing in increments of 10′. The waterspout travels wherever the caster directs it at a speed of 12, up to the maximum range of the spell. It attacks as a monster with as many Hit Dice as the caster's level. If the waterspout objects on sea or in the air, it inflicts 1 HD of damage for every 10′ of height that it has. A waterspout is not affected by *dispel magic*, but can be countered by wind elementals or other winds of magical origin (like *summon wind*), blowing in a direction counter to the waterspout's rotation. Each level of the opposing wind reduces the waterspout by 10′; thus, a 210′ waterspout could be completely countered by seven *gust of wind* or three *summon wind* spells.

Wood rot (Alteration)
Level: 6 Components: V, S, M
Range: 10 yds. CT: 4
Dur.: 1 rd + 1/lvl Save: None
Area of Effect: 10′ × 10′ of planking

This spell accelerates the decay of a ship's hull or deck structure. The wood thus affected crumbles away at a rate of 1 cubic foot per round, effectively destroying the hull integrity, a mast, or up to 12 square feet of 1 inch thick deck each round. All affected wood must be a continuous area; the rot cannot be sped up in more than one location. The reverse of this spell is *restore wood*, which can nullify the effects of a *wood rot* attack or of natural decay. The material component is one wood-borer worm.

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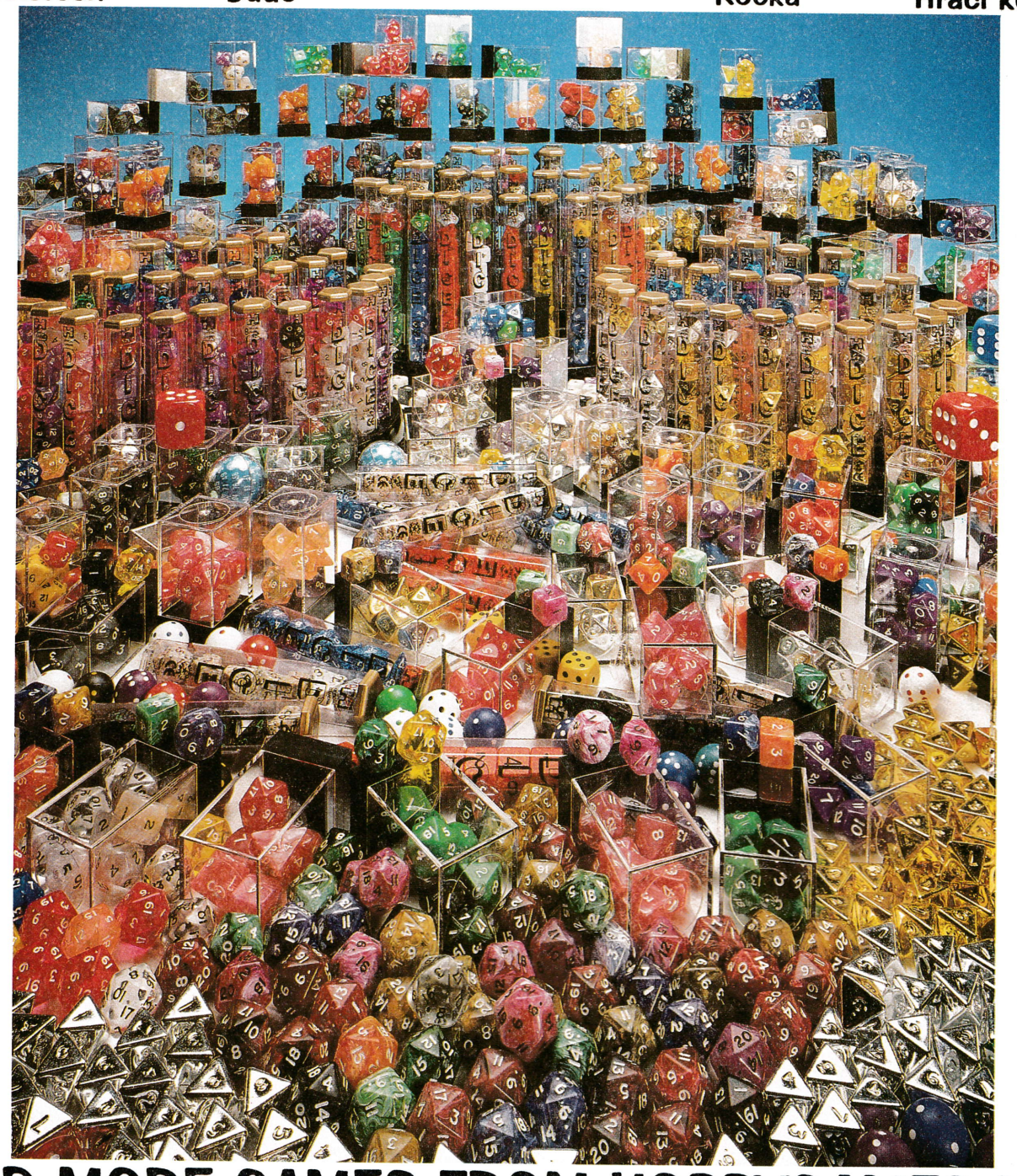

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Elven Magic

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Though the following items were all crafted by elves through the use of elven magic, the items themselves may be used by any character, regardless of class, race, or gender, provided they meet any special requirements noted in the item's description. These items are regarded as a branch of elven lore because of how they were made; special elven spells are required to enchant these devices (though the exact spells are not listed here). Only elves, or those beings with access to well-guarded elven lore, can create these magical items.

Arrow of Return
These arrows come in both sheaf and flight varieties, and typically number 1-6 when discovered. An *arrow of return* usually gains +3 to attack and damage rolls (see below), but its true power is reflected in its name.

Each time an *arrow of return* is fired from a bow, it magically returns to the arrow's quiver, whether or not it hits the target. In the event that the arrow hits its intended target, the arrow loses one "plus" upon returning to the quiver. Thus, its magical bonus diminishes to +2 after the first successful hit, +1 after the second, and after hitting a third time, the arrow vanishes forever. An *arrow of return* does not lose any potence if the target is missed, though it will return to the quiver nevertheless. In any case, if such a missile is broken, its magic is lost.
XP Value: 300 each

Cloak of the Unicorn
Creating a cloak of this sort requires a female elven priest and a wizard (or a multi-classed wizard/priest). The exact process, however, is unknown to all but the most powerful of such spellcasters. In addition to this, only good-aligned female

elves, half-elves, or humans may use a *cloak of the unicorn*. It does not function for males or those of other races. If donned by any being of evil alignment, a *cloak of the unicorn* acts as a *cloak of poisonousness* in all ways (see the *DMG* for details).

A *unicorn cloak* is cut from a yellowish-white material woven from a unicorn's mane. When worn by a woman of the appropriate race, the cloak produces an aura of *sympathy* (as the eighth-level wizard spell), which applies only to unicorns. In addition, the wearer can transform herself into a unicorn by act of will. The cloak-wearer may change into a unicorn as often as desired and may remain in the new form as long as is necessary.

While in unicorn form, the wearer retains her own Hit Dice, hit points, saving throws, and Intelligence, but in all other ways she is a unicorn, and she may use all of the powers and abilities inherent to such creatures. Held or carried items are absorbed into the unicorn form, so all the wearer's magical items become temporarily inert (only the cloak's *sympathy* power remains in effect). If the wearer can wield spells or spell-like natural abilities in her true form, these abilities are rendered dormant for as long as the wearer remains in unicorn form. Psionics are unaffected by the transformation, as are natural abilities that are not directly linked to some spell or magical device (e.g. magic resistance, regeneration due to unusually high Constitution, spell immunities, etc.). While in unicorn form, the wearer is immune to all *polymorphing* or *shapechanging* magic and effects, regardless of the cloak-wearer's wishes. This includes "natural" shape-shifting abilities such as those possessed by druids and lycanthropes.

The wearer can return to her own form with a mental command. Transformation from one form to another takes an entire round, but no System Shock roll is required.
XP Value: 3,000

Faerie stone
Also called *elven gems, jewels of elvenkind,* and similar names, *faerie stones* are highly prized among all creatures, not just sylvan ones. They are extremely difficult to manufacture and therefore are quite rare.

A *faerie stone* is always made from a large, precious gemstone (usually an emerald or sapphire), cut in an ovoid shape that fits easily in the owner's palm. The jewels are always utterly flawless, with a value of no less than 5,000 gp.

A *faerie stone* has several powers, as follows:

- When held in the hand (in contact with the holder's flesh), the *faerie stone* conveys *infravision* to its user, out to a distance of 30'. If the holder already has infravision, its range is extended by a like distance. This vision remains in effect as long as the user holds the *faerie stone* in his bare hand.
- Three times per day, the user can employ a limited form of *telepathy* to communicate with any intelligent creature(s) within 30 yards. This power does not allow the user to probe minds. This effect lasts for three turns per use.
- Twice per day, the owner can command the *faerie stone* to release a volley of *magic missiles* as if cast by a 9th-level wizard (5 missiles of 1d4 + 1 hp damage each at a range of up to 150 yards).
- Once each day, the owner can invoke a *cerulean sword,* a shimmering blue blade of magical force (treat this as a *faerie sword* from the *Elves of Evermeet* accessory, cast by a 12th-level wizard; if *EoE* is unavailable, treat it as a *Mordenkainen's sword*). To use the *cerulean sword,* the *faerie stone* and the sword it projects must be held in the user's bare hand.

XP Value: 5,000

Elven Hound
A variation of the common *onyx dog* variety of *figurine of wondrous power,* this small statuette takes the form of a cooshee when activated (see the *MM,* page 241). The figurine may be activated no more than once per week, for no longer than six hours.

The *elven hound* always has maximum hit points and an Intelligence of 8-10. It may speak to its owner in elvish. (If the owner cannot speak elvish, no communication is possible.) In all other ways, the *elven hound* functions as a normal cooshee, (as per the *MM*).

This device conforms to the advantages and limitations common to all *figurines of wondrous power.*
XP Value: 300

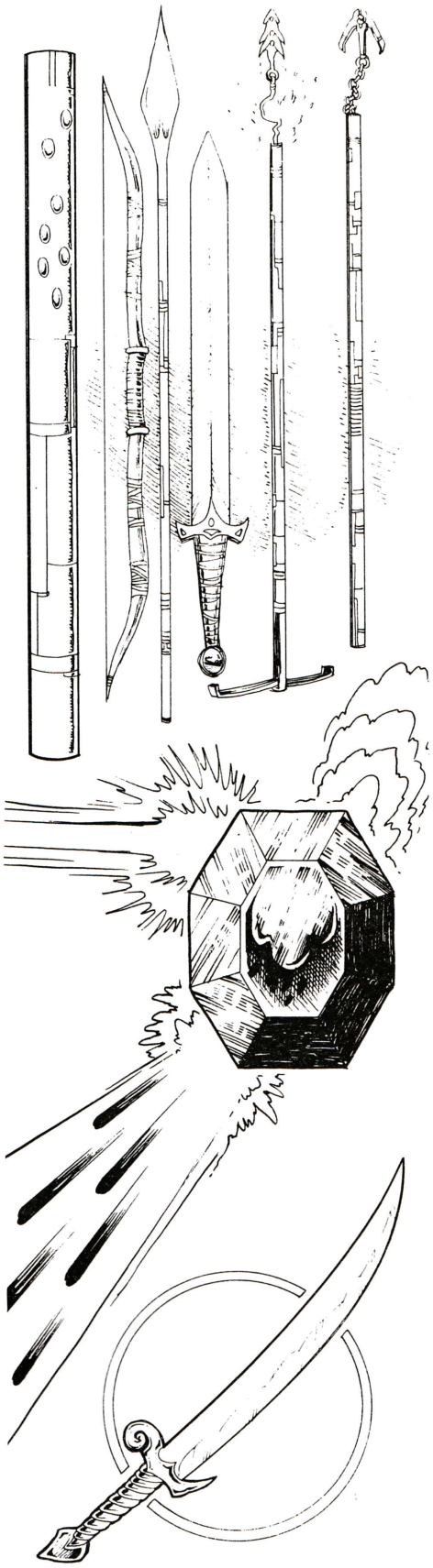
Rod of Sylvan Prowess
A relative of the famed *rod of lordly might,* this rod may be used only by characters of the warrior classes (rangers and woodsmen find it particularly useful).

Like a *rod of lordly might,* a *rod of sylvan prowess* is made entirely of metal and thicker than other rods. A Strength of 16 is required to wield its 10 lb. weight properly (−1 penalty to attack rolls for each point of Strength below 16).

Unlike a *rod of lordly might,* a *rod of sylvan prowess* does not possess spell-like functions or charges, though it does have the ability to transform itself from one type of weapon into another, if the proper button is depressed. This power functions as follows:

- In its normal form, it appears as a normal length of metal. Though it does not possess the flanged ball common to a *rod of lordly might,* it is still equal to a *mace +2* if used in combat.
- If the first button is pressed, the rod warps and lengthens, becoming a *long bow +1.* The user must provide the arrows.
- If the second button is pushed, a piercing blade springs from one end and the handle lengthens, creating a *spear +3.* The overall length of the weapon ranges from 6'-10', and if fully extended, it may be used as a light lance.
- When the third button is depressed, the rod flattens out and shrinks to a length of 3' to form a *long sword +4, elven blade* (see below).

In addition to its weapon functions, a *rod of sylvan prowess* has several mundane abilities. If the rod's fourth button is pressed, the tip of the rod assumes the



form of a four-pronged grappling hook. If that button is pushed a second time, the grapple is launched from the rod, but remains attached via a steel chain with a length of up to 50', which may be climbed. This function eliminates the need of the usual rope and grapple combination.

• When the rod is held perpendicular to the ground and its fifth button is pressed, a barbed spike protrudes from its tip and two short, six-inch bars fold out from its base, one on either side. If the button is pushed a second time, the spike is fired straight up, though it remains connected to the remainder of the rod by a length of steel cable (this inflicts 2d4 hp damage if the wielder rolls a successful attack roll against any target in the spike's way).

The spike carries sufficient force to become embedded in solid stone, and the barbs keep it solidly anchored. The cable that connects the spike with the rod can reach a length of up to 50', but it immediately stops playing out length as soon as the spike is embedded. If a creature stands on the steel bars at the base of the rod and the fifth button is pressed a third time, the cable reels itself in, drawing the rod and its cargo up to the spike. (If the surface the spike is embedded in cannot support the creature standing on the crosspieces, the spike simply tears away from the surface.) Obviously, an overhead surface must exist for the spike to secure itself.

• The sixth and final button returns the rod to its normal form, whether the rod is in a weapon mode or the grapple/spike applications.

The functions of the rod are negated by a *dispel magic* spell; this counterspell also restores the rod to its normal form.

XP Value: 4,000

Elven Blade

Forged only in long and short sword varieties, elven blades are easily identifiable by the slight curve in their blade and their single edge. An elven blade is slender, roughly 1"-1½" wide, 1/4" thick along its spine, and 30" long (20" for short swords). Including quillons, hilt, and pommel, such a weapon is approximately 3' long (2' feet for a short sword). An *elven blade* is not a scimitar or cutlass, nor should it be confused with one—such blades have a much more pronounced curve to their length and are more cumbersome. An *elven blade* most resembles the katana of Japan, but with a western-style hilt and crosspiece. Despite its apparent fragility, an *elven blade* is rigid, strong, and exceptionally balanced.

Due to its unique design, an *elven blade* inflicts 1d10 (long sword) or 1d8 (short sword) hp damage, regardless of the target's size. Its primary use is as a slashing weapon, but it functions almost as well for thrusting and cleaving attacks.

Elven blades are as rare and potentially valuable as elven chain mail, and as such they are not a common finds—even in elven societies. Likewise, they should not be placed in a randomly-selected treasure hoard.

Just as elven chain mail cannot be constructed by non-elves, only the elven races know the secrets of forging an *elven blade*. While *elven blades* are often non-magical, magical blades do exist. Due to their exquisite craftsmanship, the experience point value for making a magical *elven blade* is 500 points more than the usual amount for a magical sword, as detailed in the *DMG*. Thus, a *long sword +1, elven blade* is worth 900 XP to its maker, instead of the usual 400, while a *frostbrand, elven blade* is worth 2,100 XP, instead of the normal 1,600.

Tent of Elvenkind

When collapsed for storage or transport, a *tent of elvenkind* is a drab, gray color, very much like any other disassembled tent. When erected, the tent assumes all of the qualities and characteristics of a *cloak of elvenkind* (as per the *DMG*). Thus, the tent is nearly invisible in most terrain.

A *tent of elvenkind* is large enough (roughly 8-10 square feet of floor space) to hold five man-sized creatures in moderate comfort. It is squarish in shape and has a raised center (which allows rain water to run off). A 2' square area on three of its four "walls" can be rolled up to provide windows, while a 3' × 5' flap functions as a door on the fourth wall. It is held up by four corner poles (each 5' tall) and a thicker center pole (7' tall). The poles themselves may be anything from tree branches to metal rods, as the fabric of the tent radiates all of its magic. As a result, lost or broken poles can be replaced as desired. The tent's fabric is entirely waterproof, but it is no more durable than a normal tent (though bonuses to saving throws still apply due to its enchantment).

XP Value: 1,000

Wand of Faerie Spheres

A *wand of faerie spheres* is a multi-functional device that may be used by wizards and priests only, including specialized wizards, druids, and specialty priests. Like all wands, a *wand of faerie spheres* may have up to 100 charges when found, and it functions at the 6th level of ability.

When the wand's magic is invoked, it discharges a *faerie sphere* (a tiny, marble-sized globe of colored light), which races

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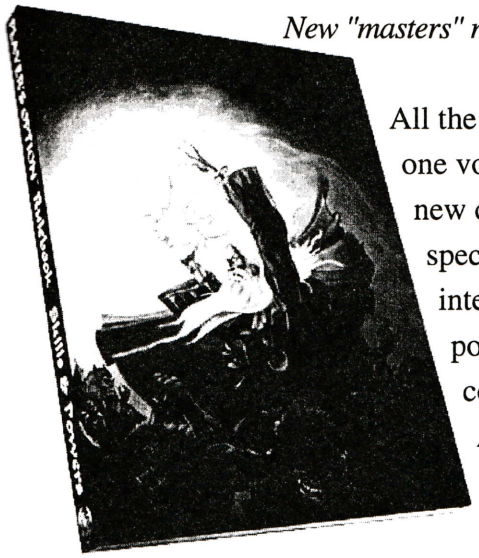

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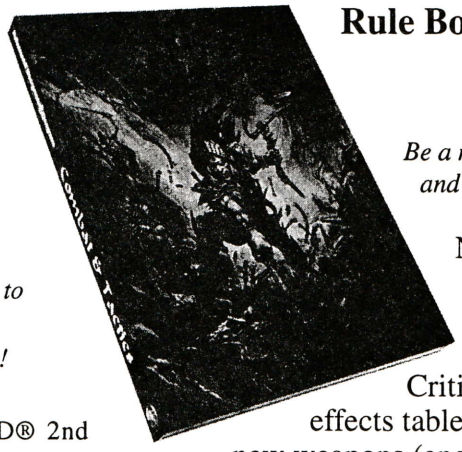

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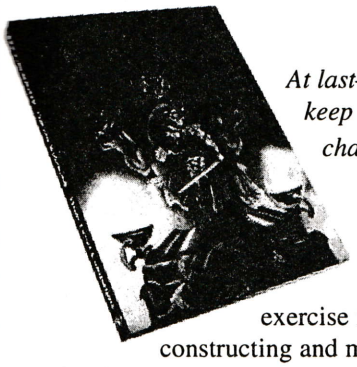

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out to a distance of 50 yards, always striking its target unless a *wall of force, antimagic shell,* or similar barrier spell intervenes. The wand can produce seven different *faerie spheres,* which the wielder can choose from, each with a different effect. Each of the first six *faerie spheres* has a different color, those being red, yellow, green, blue, orange, and violet, respectively. The seventh is multicolored.

Each *faerie sphere* has its own word of activation (a total of seven command words). The individual effects are as follows:

Blue: When it strikes a target, this *faerie sphere* expands, forming a globe of blue light centered on the victim. The globe acts as a stationary, spherical *wall of force* that lasts for 2-5 turns. It is just large enough to contain the target (regardless of size), and, unless other creatures are close to the victim (e.g., carried, engaged in combat, etc.), only the target is confined. Unlike a normal *wall of force,* the globe releases an electrical shock when touched. This charge inflicts 10 hp damage, 5 hp damage if a saving throw vs. wand is successful. The shock harms creatures outside the sphere as well as those within.

In addition, the globe absorbs all electrical attacks directed at it, extending its duration by 1 round per damage die. All other attack forms have the same effect they would against a *wall of force.* This power requires 2 charges.

Green: When this *faerie sphere* makes contact with its target, it immediately grows in size, encapsulating the subject in a 10′ radius globe of emerald light (if the target is larger than this, the globe grows proportionately). The subject may move normally, but the sphere moves with the victim, regardless of the target's means of locomotion.

The globe of green light creates a mobile wild magic area, and any spells or spell-like effects cast within or through the sphere induce a wild surge (see the *Tome of Magic,* pages 4-8, for details of wild magic and wild surges). The effects of the wild surge occur within the sphere itself, and only creatures within the sphere are affected. The effect lasts for 1 turn, and no saving throw is allowed. Use of this power drains 2 charges.

Orange: When it strikes its target, this *faerie sphere* explodes in a 6d6 *fireball.* A successful save vs. wand reduces this damage by half. Regardless of the saving throw, however, a circular *wall of fire* springs up, centering on the *fireball's* point of impact. This power requires 2 charges from the wand.

Red: This *faerie sphere* instantly ages all organic material held or carried by the target, making it crumble to dust. Each item type receives a saving throw of 10 to avoid the effect; roll one saving throw for all paper products, one for leather items, one for cloth, one for wood, and so forth. If the saving throw for leather fails, all leather items carried by the victim crumble, but if the saving throw succeeds, none of the target's leather items are harmed. Magical materials receive normal bonuses to the saving throw, of course.

Examination of the dust from destroyed items reveal that it has been totally desiccated. This effect uses 1 charge.

Violet: A creature struck by a violet *faerie sphere* is affected by a *faerie fire* spell. In addition, the target creature must make a saving throw vs. wand or be subject to a *heat metal* spell. This *faerie sphere* drains 1 charge from the wand.

Yellow: When this *faerie sphere* strikes the target, it bursts in a flash of blinding yellow light, and the victim must make a saving throw vs. wand. If the saving throw fails, the target is blinded for 2d4 + 2 rounds, during which time the victim suffers a −4 penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, and armor class. If the saving throw is successful, however, the subject is partially blinded for 1d4 + 1 rounds, suffering a −2 penalty to armor class, saving throws, and attack rolls.

Creatures that do not require sight to function are unaffected. Likewise, creatures that shield their eyes before impact are partially blinded if the saving throw fails, or completely unaffected if the saving throw succeeds. This *faerie sphere* drains 1 charge.

Chromatic: The final ability of a *wand of faerie spheres* is the most powerful and the most costly. By expending 10 charges, the wand's wielder can shoot a multicolored *faerie sphere* at a target within 50 yards. On impact, the sphere's victim is affected as if he had touched a *prismatic sphere.* This *faerie sphere* does not create a *prismatic sphere*—rather, the bursting chromatic sphere brings the effects of that spell into being just long enough to summon a flash of brightness that affects the target, after which the spell effects immediately disperse. If the wand lacks sufficient charges to invoke this power (i.e., 9 charges or less), the *faerie sphere* does not appear, but the charges are still expended, draining the wand of all magic.

A *wand of faerie spheres* can be recharged by a wizard or priest with access to the proper elven lore, and the ability to cast the spells that the spheres duplicate.

XP Value: 5,000

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Sage Advice

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (SASEs are being returned with writer's guidelines for the magazine).

This month, "Sage Advice" looks at magic and optional rules in the AD&D® game. Unless otherwise stated, page references are for AD&D game rulebooks printed after April, 1995.

Is it possible to cast spells through a restricted space, such as an arrow slit or peephole?

According to Chapter 7 of the *Player's Handbook* (page 117), a spell can be cast through a restricted space only if the space is large enough to allow the caster to see the target and large enough to let the spell effect through at the same time. Arrow slits generally are sufficiently large for spellcasting, but peepholes usually are not. Also, remember that a spellcaster must have both arms free. A wizard with his eye stuck up against a peephole is in no position to cast any spells at all. Even a very large peephole probably wouldn't allow a character to simultaneously complete a spell and keep a target in sight unless the target was right behind the peephole.

After a disastrous encounter in my campaign several PCs and their faerie dragon companion lay dead. The group's cleric used *raise dead* spells to revive the slain characters, but I didn't allow them to raise the faerie dragon. Was I right? Is there any way to raise a dead faerie dragon?

A *raise dead* spell won't help a faerie dragon unless the DM says so. The spell description limits the effect to dwarves, gnomes, half-elves, humans, and other creatures at the DM's option. The general intent behind the spell, however, is to limit *raise dead* to humans and demihumans. The only time it would be wise to extend the effect beyond that would be for campaigns that have major PC races that are not humanoid (such as the bariaur from the PLANESCAPE™ setting).

However, several spells or items could revive your dead faerie dragon. The 7th level *resurrection* spell works on *any* living creature. A *rod of resurrection* could work on a faerie dragon if the DM allows; I recommend an expenditure of seven charges, the same as would be needed for an elf wizard. Of course, a *wish* would bring back the faerie dragon, too.

How much damage would a *wall of stone* spell inflict if it was cast horizontally over a creature so that it would fall and crush it? I've always thought that *wall of stone* could not be used this way, but Elminster did it in a novel. Was that just for the book, or can it be done in the game?

According to the spell description, a *wall of stone* must merge with and be solidly supported by existing stone. So, no, it cannot be created in thin air so that it drops onto an opponent. Perhaps Elminster has researched his own version of the spell specifically for this purpose. If a character manages to make a *wall of stone* fall on top of a creature (perhaps with judicious use of a *transmute rock to mud* or *disintegrate* spell), I'd suggest treating it like a *wall of iron* spell—creatures of up to size Large are killed unless they make a saving throw vs. death magic, and Huge and Gargantuan creatures are unaffected.

Elven huntsmen (from *The Complete Book of Elves*, page 92) are supposed to suffer a smaller penalty to tracking attempts than other nonrangers do, but the kit description doesn't say what their reduced penalty is.

I suggest a −3 to the proficiency score rather than the standard −6.

***The Complete Book of Necromancers* says that wizards get a × 1.5 bonus when calculating their chances to become wild talents. *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, however, says wizards, priests, and nonhumans get a penalty of ×.5 when rolling for wild talents, which is correct?**

The text and example on page 27 of the *The Complete Book of Necromancers* is incorrect. Wizards suffer a 50% penalty (× .5 multiplier) to their chances for gaining psionic wild talents.

Appendices 2 and 3 from *The Complete Book of Necromancers* list the spell *detect life* as both a 2nd-level wizard spell and a 1st-level priest spell. Only the wizard version is listed in the *CBN*'s spell index.

The *detect life* life spell is included in *The Complete Wizard's Handbook* (page 98). Priestly necromancers can use it as a 1st-level spell. Other than its level, the priest version has the same statistics as given in the *CWH*.

Would *gloves of missile snaring* stop a *magic missile* spell?

No. *Gloves of missile snaring* have no effect on spell attacks, even missile-like spells such as *magic missile* and *Melf's minute meteors*.

Do intelligent weapons actually contain a person's mind? If so, could a *magic jar* spell be used to transfer the mind from the weapon to a body?

According to the *Book of Artifacts*, page 128, an intelligent magical item can be created only if the character enchanting it is willing to transfer his own life force into the item. The process, however, destroys the character's psyche and imbues the item with intelligence and at least a smidgen of the original character's personality. The item and the mind cannot be separated thereafter without destroying them both.

Some time ago, one of my characters was killed and turned into a vampire by Strahd. More recently, my group was adventuring in Sigil and my character decided to join the Dustmen. Now, the Dustmen have a truce with the undead, and no undead will harm my character or any other member of the Dustmen. If my group returns to Castle Ravenloft and encounters my old character, can my new character protect my companions form my old character, say by jumping in the vampire's way so as to block a blow?

Your character would be attacked. The dead truce makes undead ignore Dustmen

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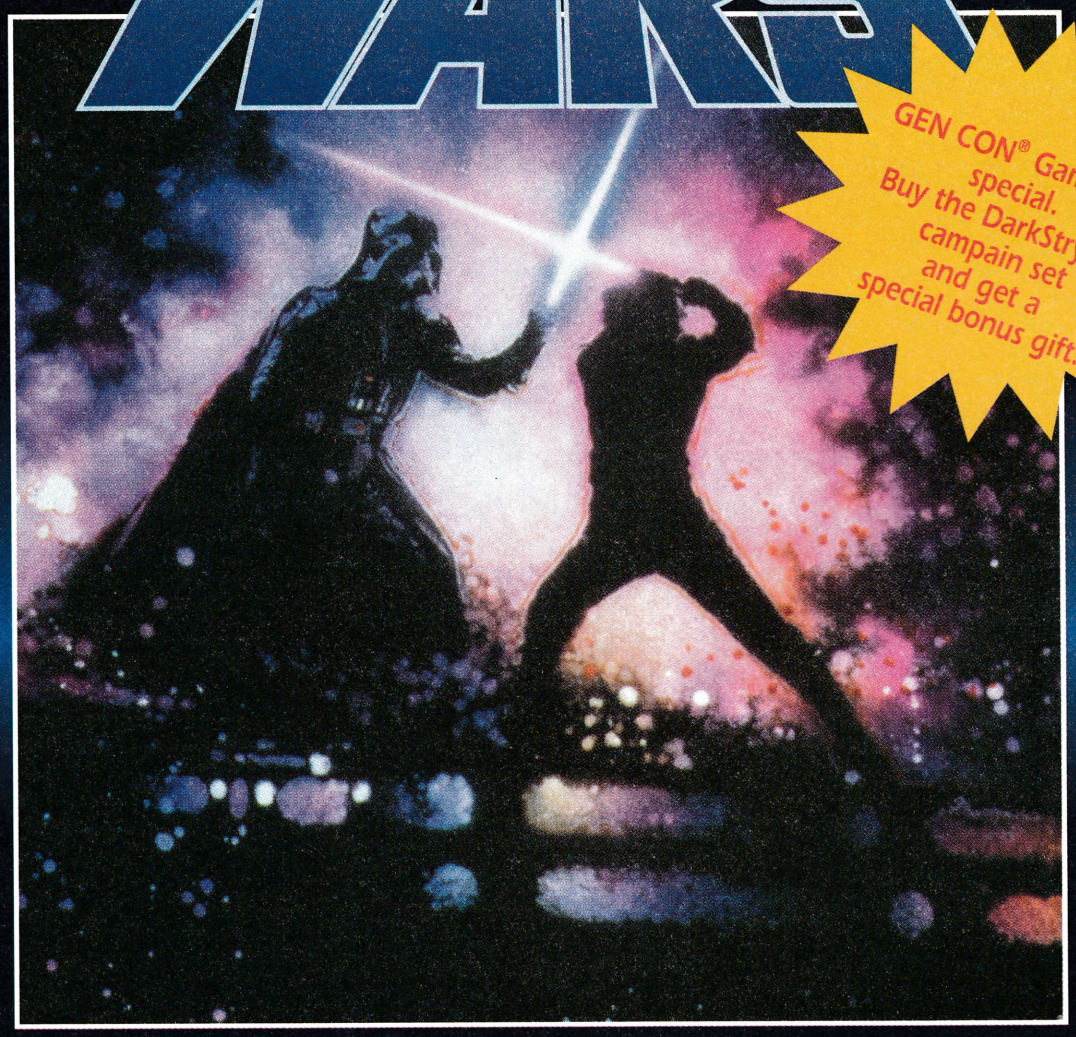

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only so long as they are neutral to any undead they meet. If a Dustman interferes with an undead creature in any way, by spoiling attacks, stealing treasure, trespassing where they don't belong, or anything else that the creature regards as hostile, the truce is broken and the undead can attack. Also, it would be entirely reasonable for the DM to rule that undead in Ravenloft don't observe the truce. Darklords such as Strahd and creatures under his direct control certainly don't.

The description for the psionic power Empower says that a character must be 10th level to learn it. However, a psionicist doesn't gain a new science at 10th level, but he does gain a new one at both 9th and 11th levels. At what level can a psionicist use this power?

A psionicist must be at least 10th level to know the Empower science. As you point out, psionicists don't normally gain new sciences when reaching 10th level, so most of them have to wait until they reach 11th level to learn the Empower science. The DM might allow a psionicist to leave the science she gains at 9th level open so the slot is available at 10th level for Empower.

***The Complete Psionics Handbook* says a psionic item's Intelligence score is equal to its creator's Intelligence −1d6. Does this mean that a psionic item is limited to using only those powers that use Intelligence as a base power score?**

A psionic item's Intelligence score is used in conjunction with Table 113 from the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide,* which determines the item's basic ability to communicate. The item's Intelligence score also is used to determine its personality score in the event that a conflict arises between it and its owner, as described in Appendix 3 of the *DMG.* An item's power score is not based on its Intelligence, and psionic items are not limited to Intelligence-based powers.

A psionicist who creates a psionic item can empower it with any psionic power he knows. If the attempt to empower the item succeeds, the item's power score is always two points less than the character's power score for the ability in question (see page 94 of *The Complete Psionics Handbook*).

Can psionic items use the Life Draining science or Lend Health devotion? Since items don't have hit points, how would these powers work? Could a psionic item use the Absorb Disease devotion even through is has no "body" to pull the disease into? What about purely mental diseases? If an item could absorb a disease, what would the effect on the item be? The Switch Personality science causes the bodies that receive new personalities to degenerate, causing a loss of Constitution. What happens to a psionic item that uses this power?

In every case where an item produces a psionic effect that is harmful to the user, such as loss of hit points, a disease, an ability score reduction, or the like, the loss is inflicted on the character using the item, not on the item. If the item is acting independently, it cannot use such powers. In the case of Switch Personality, the personality of the item's user switches with the subject's and both bodies lose Constitution normally. Likewise, hit points gained by Life Draining are transferred to the item's user. Hit points lent by Lend Health are drained from item's user. A character who uses a psionic item to absorb a disease gets the disease himself.

Just how quickly does a psionic item regain PSPs?

Psionic items always regain PSPs at the resting rate, six points an hour under the *CPH* rules or one eighth of their total PSPs each hour under the revised rules from the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills & Powers* book.

Does a *ring of wizardry* double the number of spells a specialist wizard gets?

Yes, but the specialist's bonus spells are not doubled. For example, a 5th-level wizard can memorize four 1st-level spells each day. If the character was a transmuter, the daily limit would be four 1st-level spells plus an extra alteration spell. A *ring of wizardry* that doubled 1st-level spells would give the character nine 1st-level spells, eight (4 × 2) plus an extra alteration spell.

The *hallucinatory forest* spell creates a forest that looks real to anyone but a druid. What does the forest look like? What would a druid see? Would a person who believed the forest see a druid walking right through tree trunks? What happens to characters who actually see the spell being cast? What effect would a *fireball* have on the forest and vice versa?

A *hallucinatory forest* looks just like a real forest, right down to the layer of last year's leaves or pine needles on the ground. The plants in a *hallucinatory forest* are appropriate for the prevailing terrain and climate, or the closest plausible type where no forest could normally grow. For example, a *hallucinatory forest* at the north pole would contain some kind of pine trees.

Exactly what a druid sees when looking at a *hallucinatory forest* is up to the DM. I suggest that a druid either sees what everybody else sees but knows it's a fake (something like walking through a museum forest exhibit with artificial trees in it) or sees the actual terrain with a ghost image of a forest superimposed over it. Pick one and stick with it. In either case, a druid can walk through the forest at whatever Movement Rate the actual terrain allows. Other characters see the druid zipping through the trees and undergrowth at a phenomenal rate, but they don't see the druid doing anything that would suggest the forest isn't real—such as walking right through a tree.

PCs who see this spell being cast believe that a real forest has sprung up. If they are not druids, centaurs, or other denizens of the woodlands, they can't disbelieve the effect, even if a woodland creature tells them what is really going on.

Spell effects appear to work normally within a *hallucinatory forest.* A *fireball* expands to its normal size and blasts everything inside its radius. If the weather is dry enough, a *fireball* might even appear to set the *hallucinatory forest* on fire. A *dispel magic* from any character, even one who has been completely fooled by the spell, has the normal chance to end the spell.

Which method should be used when calculating a demihuman thief's chance for surprise? The racial surprise chance or the thief move silently chance?

Use the method that gives the thief the best chance to achieve surprise, which almost always will be the racial chance. A successful attempt to move silently does not automatically result in surprise for the other party, just a −2 modifier for a silent opponent. This is not cumulative with racial modifiers for surprise because they already assume fairly quiet movement on the character's part.

Can a *teleport* or *dimension door* spell be used to bypass an *Otiluke's resilient sphere?* Would a *project image* spell function for a wizard encased in the sphere if the image was outside the sphere? Would the wizard be able to cast spells through the image?

Teleportation is subject to all kinds of restrictions according to local conditions, and an *Otiluke's resilient sphere* certainly could be one such condition. However, I recommend that you *do* allow character's to teleport into or out of *Otiluke's resilient spheres.* The former is possible only if there is sufficient space inside the sphere to hold the teleporting creature. Also, it is far more reasonable to disallow teleporting through an *Otiluke's telekinetic sphere,* which is a much more powerful spell.

The channel between a character and a *projected image* is broken by anything that blocks the character's sight or that prevents the character from casting a spell into the location where the image is. This includes barriers such as *walls of force* and the two Otiluke's sphere spells. Ω

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DANGEROUS ground

by William J. White

Artwork by Brent Arnst

Some of the best role-playing adventures involve little or no combat: the characters solve puzzles, outwit opponents, and escape traps to reach their goal. But role-playing has been described as "participatory story-telling"—and stories must have conflict, that is, a hero versus some antagonist.

Melee combat puts this conflict, in the form of adventurers versus monsters and other villains, into a dramatic, dynamic, and easily visualizable form. The drama springs from the element of danger. The Lord of Montrose's toast is oft-quoted, but has some bearing here:

> He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his desserts are small
> Who dares not put it to the touch,
> To win or lose it all.

Combat should be a high-stakes event; players put their characters "to the touch" to reap fame, fortune, and (of course) higher experience levels.

Too often, however, combat in role-playing games is merely dice-rolling and number-crunching; in its worst form, this is aptly derided as "hack and slash" gaming. Even in the best campaigns, combat sometimes lacks the drama and excitement that makes players feel as if their characters have risked their lives, overcome overwhelming odds, and emerged victorious.

There are many ways for a referee to keep combat encounters exciting and dramatic. This article focuses on the idea that *where* combat takes place is at least as important as *whom* the characters are fighting. Battles should be fought on dangerous ground.

Stand or Fall

The referee decides where an encounter takes place, whether in a cramped dungeon corridor or in an open field where orcs are mustering. However, to design a memorable encounter, make the scene itself as terrifying as the PCs' adversaries.

The purpose of setting encounters on dangerous ground is not to rack up PC casualties; instead, it should make the players feel that their characters have survived some great peril and withstood some terrible risk.

For example, in Roger Zelazny's *Nine Princes in Amber*, Corwin, his brother Bleys, and their army fought their way up

a narrow set of stairs cut from the side of a mountain. Only one warrior at a time could face the enemy, and the stairway itself was dangerous; Bleys fell from it during the struggle, and it was a long way down. The risks were great.

Despite those risks, Bleys survived because Corwin threw him a deck of magic cards that could be used as a teleportation device. Though his life was spared, Bleys was "out of the adventure." This illustrates the second point of dangerous ground; despite danger, the PCs should win through. Knocking a PC unconscious or forcing him to retreat can be a good penalty for a referee to impose (in lieu of outright destruction).

Choosing Your Ground

At the simplest level, choosing ground means considering the surroundings when making judgements about combat. Battles at night in dense woods should feel different from brawls on a village common in broad daylight.

Part of the distinction depends on the DM's ability to describe the situation—but the rules governing combat can also affect the players' feel for where they are and what is going on. For example:

- In dense wood, impose restrictions on missile fire and on large weapons. Add movement restrictions if thick underbrush also exists.
- Night or fog limit visibility, causing penalties to attacks, limiting information about the foe's number and location, and leading PCs to stumble over unseen obstacles when running.
- Mud and snow slow movement, make falls more likely, and can hide quicksand, sinkholes, or other pitfalls.

Besides describing these things, then, the referee must be prepared to restrict PC actions based on the prevailing conditions. Usually, when deciding the effects of terrain or visibility, the referee can draw on spell descriptions that impose similar restrictions.

Dangerous White Ground

As an example of using a spell description to provide a rules framework for dangerous terrain, the wizard spell *darkness, 15' radius* also describes a moonless night or darkened room, or the effects of *wall of fog* can be used for natural fog as well as a driving rain or snowstorm. The effects of extreme cold may be as severe as the 1st level *chill touch* spell, especially for unprotected characters. A sheet of ice may match the effect of a *wall of ice* spell. Characters in thick mud, deep snow, or even very loose sand may be treated as if under a *slow* spell.

Slightly more imaginative effects can also be simulated by applying other spell effects. For example, poisonous creeping vines in a forest may cause rashes like the *irritation* spell; the thick-skinned trolls who inhabit the woods are unaffected, but travelers are discomfited. As another example, a patch of particularly broken and rocky ground, with jagged stones jutting up from it, may be simulated with the priest spell *spike stones.*

Roll the Bones

Other, more dangerous, examples, with notes for the referee on incorporating them into an AD&D® adventure, may be helpful.

In these examples, reference is sometimes made to the saving throw tables. As explained in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide,* saving throws can be used for situations other than the ones to which they are commonly applied. For example, circumstances involving force of will or physical fortitude indicate a saving throw vs. paralyzation, poison, or death magic; those involving dexterity and physical stamina, a saving throw vs. breath weapon. Using saving throws to resolve this situations has the advantage that higher-level PCs are more likely to succeed at heroic feats than lower-level characters.

If you feel that the tables do not accurately reflect the chances of success, you may want to use ability checks or nonweapon proficiencies. Roll 1d20 vs. Strength, Dexterity, or Wisdom, modified according to the situation, or use character abilities such as the *open doors* chance, *bend bars/lift gates* score, or *system shock* rating. In this case, any level character has an equal chance to succeed; whether the adventurer is a novice or a veteran, the only governing factor is the ability score itself. The examples below assume that saving throws will be used.

The Fall to Doom

There are an enormous number of ways to incorporate heights, and the fear of them, into an encounter. If the PCs are forced to do battle, the referee must keep them aware that one little mistake can send them plummeting to their dooms.

For example, the referee may decide to force a fight on a rope bridge, one of those primitive-looking contrivances of creaky boards and knotted ropes that spans sheer cliffs in every adventure movie, notably *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom.* The bridge is narrow, sways in high winds, and its boards have an annoying tendency to break whenever any real weight is put on them.

To make the bridge as effective as possible, it can be located on the route to the PCs' objective and crossed relatively easily, though perhaps with a few comments about its age and state of disrepair. Be sure to mention the vertigo that looking down induces.

After the PCs reach their objective and begin their return, loaded down with treasure, set an aggressive war band of orcs in hot pursuit. Clever adventurers will make for the bridge, planning to cut the ropes once across.

However, traversing the bridge requires care. Movement is halved, and PCs running across it must make a saving throw vs. breath weapon at a penalty (−2 is not unreasonable) or break through one of the rotten timbers. If the throw fails, a generous DM may leave the PC hanging on with his fingertips for dear life. In any round that the hanging PC fails a saving throw vs. paralyzation, he can do nothing except cling to the ropes for balance; he may drop his weapon into the abyss.

When the pursuers arrive, the referee can declare that high winds make missile fire across the chasm less accurate, assessing a −2 or −4 penalty to both sides. Melee on the bridge itself is tricky; a number of rulings can be made to simulate it. An attack penalty of −1 or −2 can be imposed, and some weapons may be unusable—particularly two-handed swords and polearms. Spell-casting, except for spells with only a verbal requirement, should be disallowed while on the bridge. Groups playing with fumble rules may see a fumble lead to cutting one of the bridge's ropes.

Only PCs who do something very stupid should plummet to their deaths, but the danger should seem very real. One or two expendable orcs can step on a weak board and fall through for the edification of the PCs.

And, of course, all the din of battle and shouting of the orcs can attract the attention of whatever monsters happen to live on the far side of the chasm.

Any PCs on the bridge when, and if, the ropes are cut must make a saving throw vs. breath weapon to determine who holds on, and those who do suffer 3d6 impact damage from the bridge hitting the side of the chasm. Climbing to the top implies climbing checks, and fighting while climbing should be limited to punching or stabbing with knives, at penalties of at least −2.

If a character falls, the referee may decide that the PC could survive the impact, especially if he lands in the river below. Some falling damage can be assessed, and a saving throw or swimming proficiency check can determine whether the PC drowns, is swept away by the current and dumped ashore miles downstream, or reaches the bank below the bridge.

Up on the Rooftops

For the second example, consider an urban environment. The climax of the movie *Darkman* featured a fight between the good guy and the bad guy among the I-beams of a skyscraper under construction. At first glance, this seems to have little application to the realms of fantasy role-playing. As we will see, however, any dangerous ground presented in film, on television, or in novels can be adapted for RPG purposes.

To modify the *Darkman* scene for an FRPG setting, suppose a cathedral or great temple, very ornate and baroque, has been under construction for 30 years and is now nearing completion; the scaffolding

stretches all the way up to its steeple. However, the workers are not happy; they feel as if they're being watched, accidental falls are increasing, and some workers have even disappeared.

The PCs (perhaps through a cleric of that sect) are called in to supervise workers, to investigate the accidents, or even to complete the work (if any PCs have appropriate skills, such as masonry or carpentry). Before long, our heroes find themselves on the scaffolding surrounding the cathedral with a bunch of uneasy workers scattered around them.

The heart of the tale is this: the gargoyles on the walls were placed there by a magician or priest who had devised what he thought was a permanent *petrify monster* spell. However, the spell-caster didn't realize that the spell eventually wears off. A few of the hundreds of gargoyles are now active, and they prey on the workers, performing malicious tricks on some and carrying others off to be eaten.

When the gargoyles strike, the PCs are spread out on the scaffolding; they must climb up or down, or move along the scaffolding, to escape or to rescue a screaming workman who is being attacked—climbing checks are in order. Otherwise, movement can be handled as for the rope bridge example, above.

If a PC fails a check, the referee has several options: the PC may fall, or his feet may get tangled in a coil of rope, leaving him hanging by his ankles a hundred feet from the ground, or he may fall but catch himself, clinging to a timber by the tips of his fingers (he must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation to climb up). Even if a PC falls and all the players expect him to turn to reddish jelly on the stone flagstones below, a gargoyle may catch a falling PC and carry him to a secluded spot where the monster can play with its food.

Combat is similar to the rope bridge above, but gargoyles suddenly spring to life and swoop around the cathedral, attacking those on the scaffolding. Cautious PCs will retreat, harried by the foe as they go, but even if the PCs successfully leave, the problem of clearing out the gargoyles remains. The PCs must return to defeat the gargoyles on their home ground. Though the PCs now know the nature of the threat, they won't know exactly how many gargoyles are alive and how many are petrified statues.

Other examples of high places that may be suitable battlegrounds include narrow ledges, cliffs, ship's rigging, river gorges, icy chasms, solid clouds (see Larry Niven's *The Magic Goes Away* for an excellent example) and cloud castles, colossal statues and monuments, and even redwood-like giant trees.

The main principle to follow in designing and adjudicating these encounters is to make rulings that keep the PCs moving cautiously when they'd prefer to run like the wind; to tease them, in essence, with the prospect of a long fall to doom.

Burning Down the House

Fire is another underutilized way to endanger the PCs; blazes are inherently dangerous, and those who set them (or dwell among them) no less so. Besides the obvious peril of the flame itself are the unbearable heat and choking smoke that fire creates.

The mechanics for determining whether a character can—for example—escape from a burning building require some thought. Suppose a character awakens in his room one night to the smell of smoke. He quickly pulls on his boots and goes to investigate. Opening the door, he feels a blast of heat, and smoke pours into the room. At this point, the referee asks for a saving throw vs. poison to halve the damage from smoke inhalation (1d6, or 1d3 with save). Optionally, the referee may choose to treat smoke as a *stinking cloud* spell, doing no damage but incapacitating the victim.

Realizing that his comrades in another room have not yet been alerted, he decides to go warn them. Each round during the PCs' struggle down the hall, the player rolls another saving throw against the smoke. Bonuses may be given for precautions such as holding a wet handkerchief over his mouth and nose, keeping low or crawling to avoid the highest concentrations of smoke, or holding his breath.

Additionally, the heat may cause damage. This should be minor (no more than 2d4 even in the biggest blazes) and a saving throw may be allowed. The biggest danger, however, is in being struck by falling, flaming timbers. At least once, the player should save vs. breath weapon to avoid this—failure results in damage as for flaming oil.

The flames grow, however, and the PC realizes that he is cut off from escape. He decides that his only option is to run through the flames to safety. The referee determines that this is possible; he decides that the flames do 6d6 damage (half with a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation). The PC fails the saving throw but makes it through the flames; the referee decides that the burns the character has suffered are serious enough to require a saving throw vs. petrification each round or suffer the effects of the *symbol* of pain (that is, −4 to hit and −2 to Dexterity) until he receives medical help.

The character has already had quite an adventure and hasn't seen a single opponent. The generous referee may want to allow him to escape without further peril, or he may choose to have a revenge-bent former henchman of the PC show up, take credit for setting the blaze, and cackle gleefully that his former master cannot escape—they will perish together amid the flames. The PC pulls out his bootknife and must engage in a duel while the flames mount, suffering damage from smoke inhalation and heat while dodging falling debris. Fortunately, his opponent must do the same.

Only You Can Prevent . . .

Fires can also be used in outdoor adventures. In the most dangerous scenario, the PCs must outrace a rapidly spreading forest-or brushfire (for an example, see "Smouldering Mane" in DUNGEON® Adventures #47).

Fires have been set outdoors throughout history for a variety of purposes. Besides the camp or cooking fire, fires can clear fields for farming, flush out game, drive away insects or smoke bees from their hives, and even deprive predators (especially wolves) of their habitats.

Any of these fires can burn out of control. In a fantasy environment where *lightning bolts* and *fireballs* are common, a spell can set off a terrible blaze if conditions are right. Additionally, lightning from storms can start fires in some circumstances.

While the fire is still small, it may be extinguished with a *create water* or *affect normal fires* spell, or PCs can simply throw dirt on it with a spade. Up to a certain point, the fire can be contained—if sufficient manpower or magic is available—by making a fire break or fire trench around the affected area. *Move earth* can be very useful in such a circumstance. However, once a fire becomes large or a mass fire, the ability of adventurers to affect it significantly is limited, and their thoughts must turn to survival.

The factors governing how fast a fire spreads include wind speed and direction, what vegetation serves as fuel, the air temperature and humidity, and even the slope of the ground (fire spreads more quickly on steeper slopes, and spreads more quickly uphill than downhill). In general, however, a fire spreads at about 2–5 MPH, with larger ones having "runs" of up to 10 MPH, though this is unusual. Brush fires on thick, dry grass can spread as quickly as the wind pushes them, however.

The referee can choose a speed for the fire based on prevailing conditions, or he can roll randomly each turn to determine the speed of the fire. Choose a base speed, then add or subtract 1-3 MPH on any given roll. The speeds given above translate to a Movement Rate of 6-15, with runs up to a rate of 30.

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If the ship takes on water, crewmembers must man the pumps or bail to prevent

stretches all the way up to its steeple. However, the workers are not happy; they feel as if they're being watched, accidental falls are increasing, and some workers have even disappeared.

The PCs (perhaps through a cleric of that sect) are called in to supervise workers, to investigate the accidents, or even to complete the work (if any PCs have appropriate skills, such as masonry or carpentry). Before long, our heroes find themselves on the scaffolding surrounding the cathedral with a bunch of uneasy workers scattered around them.

The heart of the tale is this: the gargoyles on the walls were placed there by a magician or priest who had devised what he thought was a permanent *petrify monster* spell. However, the spell-caster didn't realize that the spell eventually wears off. A few of the hundreds of gargoyles are now active, and they prey on the workers, performing malicious tricks on some and carrying others off to be eaten.

When the gargoyles strike, the PCs are spread out on the scaffolding; they must climb up or down, or move along the scaffolding, to escape or to rescue a screaming workman who is being attacked—climbing checks are in order. Otherwise, movement can be handled as for the rope bridge example, above.

If a PC fails a check, the referee has several options: the PC may fall, or his feet may get tangled in a coil of rope, leaving him hanging by his ankles a hundred feet from the ground, or he may fall but catch himself, clinging to a timber by the tips of his fingers (he must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation to climb up). Even if a PC falls and all the players expect him to turn to reddish jelly on the stone flagstones below, a gargoyle may catch a falling PC and carry him to a secluded spot where the monster can play with its food.

Combat is similar to the rope bridge above, but gargoyles suddenly spring to life and swoop around the cathedral, attacking those on the scaffolding. Cautious PCs will retreat, harried by the foe as they go, but even if the PCs successfully leave, the problem of clearing out the gargoyles remains. The PCs must return to defeat the gargoyles on their home ground. Though the PCs now know the nature of the threat, they won't know exactly how many gargoyles are alive and how many are petrified statues.

Other examples of high places that may be suitable battlegrounds include narrow ledges, cliffs, ship's rigging, river gorges, icy chasms, solid clouds (see Larry Niven's *The Magic Goes Away* for an excellent example) and cloud castles, colossal statues and monuments, and even redwood-like giant trees.

The main principle to follow in designing and adjudicating these encounters is to make rulings that keep the PCs moving cautiously when they'd prefer to run like the wind; to tease them, in essence, with the prospect of a long fall to doom.

Burning Down the House

Fire is another underutilized way to endanger the PCs; blazes are inherently dangerous, and those who set them (or dwell among them) no less so. Besides the obvious peril of the flame itself are the unbearable heat and choking smoke that fire creates.

The mechanics for determining whether a character can—for example—escape from a burning building require some thought. Suppose a character awakens in his room one night to the smell of smoke. He quickly pulls on his boots and goes to investigate. Opening the door, he feels a blast of heat, and smoke pours into the room. At this point, the referee asks for a saving throw vs. poison to halve the damage from smoke inhalation (1d6, or 1d3 with save). Optionally, the referee may choose to treat smoke as a *stinking cloud* spell, doing no damage but incapacitating the victim.

Realizing that his comrades in another room have not yet been alerted, he decides to go warn them. Each round during the PCs' struggle down the hall, the player rolls another saving throw against the smoke. Bonuses may be given for precautions such as holding a wet handkerchief over his mouth and nose, keeping low or crawling to avoid the highest concentrations of smoke, or holding his breath.

Additionally, the heat may cause damage. This should be minor (no more than 2d4 even in the biggest blazes) and a saving throw may be allowed. The biggest danger, however, is in being struck by falling, flaming timbers. At least once, the player should save vs. breath weapon to avoid this—failure results in damage as for flaming oil.

The flames grow, however, and the PC realizes that he is cut off from escape. He decides that his only option is to run through the flames to safety. The referee determines that this is possible; he decides that the flames do 6d6 damage (half with a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation). The PC fails the saving throw but makes it through the flames; the referee decides that the burns the character has suffered are serious enough to require a saving throw vs. petrification each round or suffer the effects of the *symbol* of pain (that is, −4 to hit and −2 to Dexterity) until he receives medical help.

The character has already had quite an adventure and hasn't seen a single opponent. The generous referee may want to allow him to escape without further peril, or he may choose to have a revenge-bent former henchman of the PC show up, take credit for setting the blaze, and cackle gleefully that his former master cannot escape—they will perish together amid the flames. The PC pulls out his bootknife and must engage in a duel while the flames mount, suffering damage from smoke inhalation and heat while dodging falling debris. Fortunately, his opponent must do the same.

Only You Can Prevent . . .

Fires can also be used in outdoor adventures. In the most dangerous scenario, the PCs must outrace a rapidly spreading forest-or brushfire (for an example, see "Smouldering Mane" in DUNGEON® Adventures #47).

Fires have been set outdoors throughout history for a variety of purposes. Besides the camp or cooking fire, fires can clear fields for farming, flush out game, drive away insects or smoke bees from their hives, and even deprive predators (especially wolves) of their habitats.

Any of these fires can burn out of control. In a fantasy environment where *lightning bolts* and *fireballs* are common, a spell can set off a terrible blaze if conditions are right. Additionally, lightning from storms can start fires in some circumstances.

While the fire is still small, it may be extinguished with a *create water* or *affect normal fires* spell, or PCs can simply throw dirt on it with a spade. Up to a certain point, the fire can be contained—if sufficient manpower or magic is available—by making a fire break or fire trench around the affected area. *Move earth* can be very useful in such a circumstance. However, once a fire becomes large or a mass fire, the ability of adventurers to affect it significantly is limited, and their thoughts must turn to survival.

The factors governing how fast a fire spreads include wind speed and direction, what vegetation serves as fuel, the air temperature and humidity, and even the slope of the ground (fire spreads more quickly on steeper slopes, and spreads more quickly uphill than downhill). In general, however, a fire spreads at about 2–5 MPH, with larger ones having "runs" of up to 10 MPH, though this is unusual. Brush fires on thick, dry grass can spread as quickly as the wind pushes them, however.

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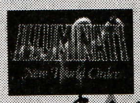
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the ship from foundering. The rudder or helm must be manned; a Seamanship check may be needed to keep the bow headed into the wind.

If a huge wave washes over the deck, everyone on deck must make a saving throw vs. breath weapon to avoid being swept overboard. The rolling of the ship as the winds and waves toss it about slows movement, increases slips and falls, and sends loose equipment crashing into a bulkhead—or an unlucky passenger.

Storms also provide the conditions for the phenomenon called St. Elmo's fire. In the real world, this is a ghostly nimbus of static electricity or some such rational thing, but, in a fantasy environment, it could be an ocean-going will-o-wisp that feeds off the life forces of drowning men.

In such an environment, combat seems unlikely—but it could occur. A ghost ship crewed by drowned men could appear, as could a leviathan, kraken, or other sea monster. A storm giant might consider a hurricane ideal fighting weather. Sahuagin or other sea-dwelling species might decide to attack ("As the huge wave breaks over the ship, you see shadowy manlike figures moving within it. What do you do?"). Perhaps a pirate ship, foundering in the storm, chances on the PCs' vessel and the buccaneer captain decides his only chance is to ram and board the more seaworthy vessel.

Or disaffected crew members may decide that their captain is incompetent; they mutiny, and a desperate melee breaks out both on deck and below. Fighting below deck is conducted in tight quarters as well as pitch-black darkness, because lighting a lantern is too dangerous. Sailing ships typically put out even their cooking fires when a storm threatens.

C. S. Forester's *Lord Hornblower* novels come to mind as a good source of information about conditions aboard sailing ships, albeit of a later period than most fantasy campaigns. Old pirate movies like "Captain Blood" can also provide inspiration.

Conclusion

This article has given some emphasis to game mechanics that encourage fighting on dangerous ground. These mechanics differ only slightly for many circumstances—saving throws to avoid damage, slowed movement, and attack penalties. It would be wise, then, to conclude by emphasizing the other aspect of DMing needed to implement melees on dangerous ground successfully.

That other aspect is description: the referee should *describe the situation* the players are in, rather than *explaining the rules* that govern the encounter. This adds tension and uncertainty to the scene, and it encourages players to think of clever and innovative ways around the danger.

Rolling the dice doesn't add the element of danger or a feeling of excitement; the important thing is what the die rolls represent. Each roll of the dice should indicate a character's success or failure at defying the elements and should be accompanied by enough detail to make the player feel that his character has done something extraordinary.

Finally, remember the basic challenge to the game master, the element that makes role-playing fun: Expect the unexpected, for you can never predict exactly what the party will do. They may take a course of action that avoids your carefully crafted battlefield, or they may call on some resource that nullifies the rules or restrictions you have set.

Don't try to force the encounter back to the original premise; if the characters can avoid it, let them. The players will enjoy their cleverness at outwitting the danger the referee has posed.

Improvise as needed, and treat the encounter as a learning experience—both for you and for your NPCs. Always remember to reward a clever player with extra experience points. If you are doing your job, your players need all the experience they can get.

In the meantime, your battles will be more colorful, more dramatic, more memorable, and—above all—more fun. Ω

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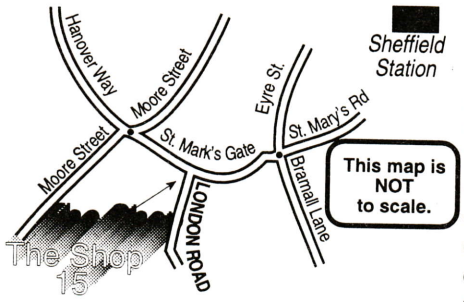

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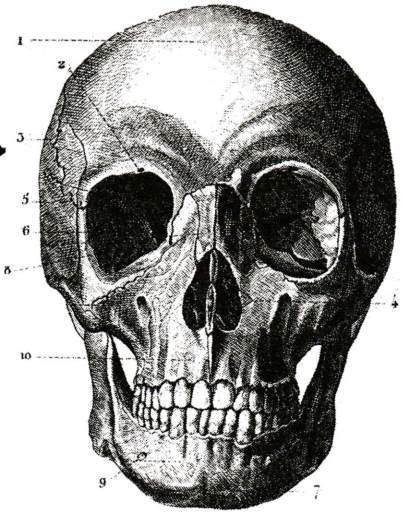

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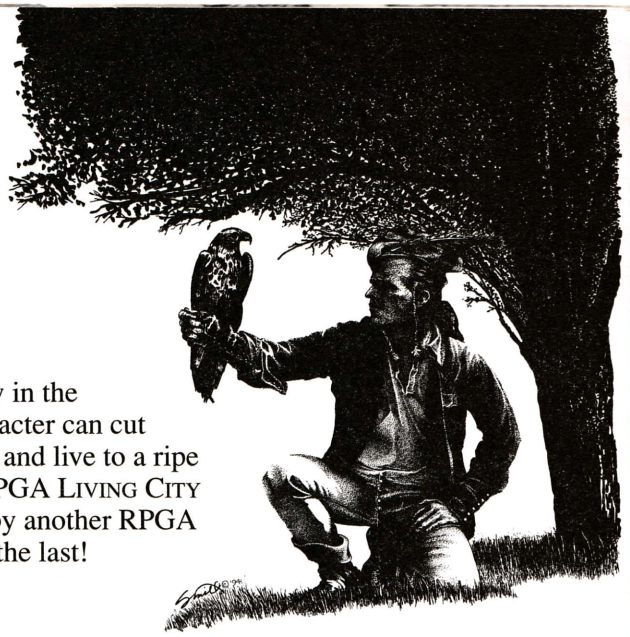

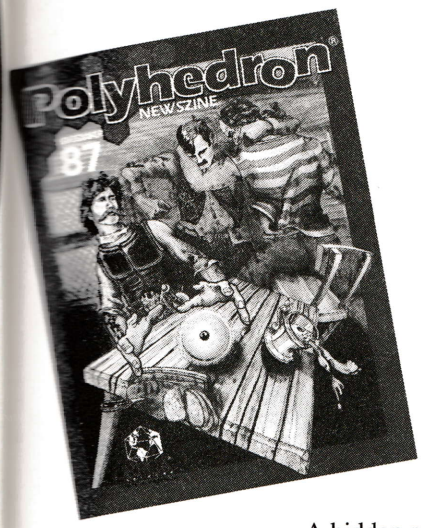

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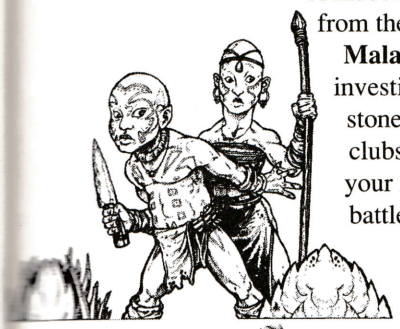

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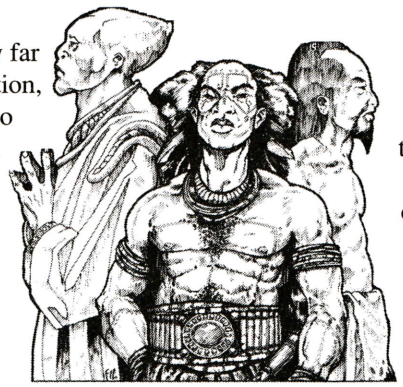

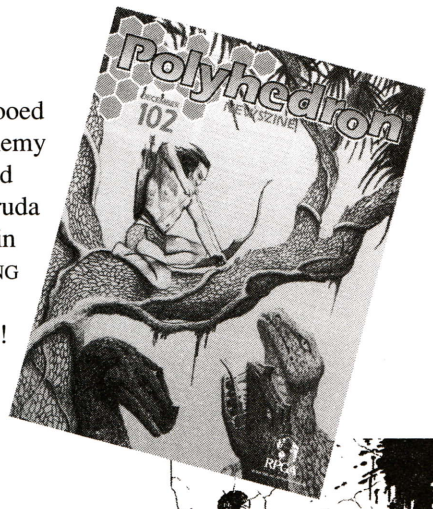

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DANIELE
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Hunt's End

by Rudy Thauberger

anok, wake up!"

Tanok felt a chitinous claw prodding his shoulder. He opened one eye and stared into the face of the thri-kreen standing over him. The mantis warrior's segmented eyes were more purple than usual; its mandibles clacked nervously. The claw poked him again.

"Tanok, clutch-brother, the sun is up!"

"I'm awake, K'rt."

The prodding continued. "The sun, Tanok, the hunt!"

Tanok grabbed the claw and gently pushed it away. "I'm awake!" he said. "Can't you see that? My eyes are open. I'm speaking to you."

The thri-kreen stared at the halfling blankly, its mandibles quivering. It loomed over him, over seven feet tall. The halfling, even with his thick mane of hair, stood well under four feet. Tanok thought he saw a look of concern on the thri-kreen's face. "You spoke several times during the night, clutch-brother," K'rt said.

"I was talking in my sleep."

"Then how do I know you're not asleep now?"

Tanok sighed. "Never mind, K'rt. Go find your brother. Bring him here."

The thri-kreen nodded and turned away. Tanok rubbed his eyes. The thri-kreen would never fully understand his need for sleep, no matter how many times he explained it. They treated it like an illness, a defect in his halfling nature.

Tanok watched K'rt leap nimbly from boulder to boulder in the direction of the templar camp. The reddish glow of the dawn gave the land around the camp the look of spilled blood. The other thri-kreen, Rr'k, had been patrolling near the camp all night, watching the templars, making sure they didn't try to slip away in the darkness.

The hunt had been good so far. Five templars were dead, two more badly wounded. Tanok expected to run at least one of the wounded to ground before the sun set. On the hunters' side, only K'rt had been injured, his carapace singed by a lightning bolt called down by one of the templars. Tanok had used his mastery of the Way to heal the wound.

Ten days they had been hunting. Ten days since Rr'k had spotted the templars leaving the foothills of the Ringing Mountains. Their feathered cloaks and moon symbols marked them as templars of Draj. The decision to begin hunting them was made quickly and easily. The templars served the sorcerer-king of Draj, one of a handful of powerful despots responsible for reducing the world of Athas to a wasted cinder. The sorcerer-king of Draj was not the most powerful of his kind, but he was the most cruel, indulging in primitive sacrifices, tearing out the hearts of hundreds of sentient beings in long, ritualistic celebrations of slaughter. His templars gathered sacrificial victims for him, raiding the villages and the wilderness of Athas, capturing humans and thri-kreen, dwarves and elves, even halflings. "We hunt them!" Rr'k declared, thrusting a claw in the direction of the templars. K'rt and Tanok could only nod grimly.

They pursued the templars through the foothills and out into the sandy wastes, harassing them at every opportuni-

Illustrations by Stephen Daniele

ty, striking down any who lagged behind the rest or wandered too far from their camp. The hunt brought out a disturbing ruthlessness in the thri-kreen. For them, hunting was a deeply spiritual discipline that left no room for sentiment or hesitation. Tanok understood the need for this discipline, believing in it himself to some extent, but it still bothered him how easily and how completely the thri-kreen dedicated themselves to the killing.

Tanok took several large sips from his waterskin, then used a few drops to clear the sleep from his eyes. He had never fully adjusted to sleeping under the open sky, without trees or ferns or the sounds of the forest enveloping him. All his years of exile hadn't changed him. He still longed for the forest's embrace, still regretted the sight of the open, empty sky each morning.

Taking a deep breath, he cleared his mind of thoughts of exile. He let a deep calm settle over him, as warm as the sunlight filling the sky. He felt the power of the Way stir inside him. He let its energies flow through him effortlessly, like blood through his veins. Other races, he'd heard, required years of training and great discipline to evoke their connection to the Way. He found that strange and sad. For halflings, the Way was life.

He concentrated on the hunt, on seeing the day about to unfold, all its possibilities shimmering and changing. He saw the image of two templars, one stabbed by Rr'k's double-bladed polearm, his gythka, the other paralysed by K'rt's spit venom. Tanok shuddered as he watched K'rt bite into the throat of his paralysed victim. The killing was done without anger or remorse. As a halfling, he should have appreciated that, but he didn't.

Other images, other possibilities, lurked in the shadows. He brought them forward, one by one. He saw K'rt wounded by a drajic harpoon, Rr'k paralysed by templar magic. He saw himself, approaching the camp, his bone knife drawn. Inside the camp, the woman, the elf, was lying on the wagon, hands and feet bound, a thick leather collar around her neck attached by a tough hemp rope to an iron ring. Her limbs were so long that her feet dangled from the back of the wagon. Tanok watched himself crawl under the wagon, saw his bone knife reaching up to cut the bonds.

Not again, he thought. He tried to push past the image, but it returned. He saw K'rt struggling, the harpoon in his side digging deeper. He saw Rr'k, frozen, a drajic blade at his throat.

Tanok cursed and opened his eyes. The image of the woman lingered, as it had since the hunt began. He was beginning to suspect that she was somehow responsible for drawing the three of them to the templars in the first place. She had begun appearing in his visions days before they started the hunt. Somehow, perhaps without even realizing it, she was calling to him. He didn't mind at first, so long as they were just killing templars. Certainly the thri-kreen were happy. But as the idea of risking himself and his companions to free the elf began growing stronger in his mind, he felt the pain of his exile more deeply than ever.

He had never been able to accept the halfling tribes' belief that the other races—the humans, the dwarves, even the elves—were meat and nothing more. "They are prey, like all beasts of the forest," he had been told again and again. "We honor them by consuming their spirits." But he refused to believe it. He watched his tribe's captives. He saw the way their hands, with five fingers like his own, brushed the dirt from their clothing and folded in their laps while they worried about their fates and touched the hands of other captives to comfort them. He listened to them speak, watched sorrow and despair and even hope blossom in their faces. Then he watched as every one of them was ritually slaughtered and eaten.

How are we different from the sorcerer-kings? he wondered. And the others, the defilers, sorcerers who consume the life force of the land to power their corrupt magic. How are we different from them if we kill these innocents? These were his thoughts, but his protests remained silent. He was afraid of what the elders of the tribe would think of him. Instead, he turned inward, brooding, watching.

Tanok had no idea what compelled him to choose the human with the red hair as the one he would free. Perhaps it was the scars on the man's face and back. Perhaps it was his limp, or the delicate way he moved his head. If he had known that the man was a defiler, if he had not been so naive, he would have let the tribe kill him, but he did not know.

After the battle—after two dozen halflings lay dead—he remembered the look on the shaman's face as she stood next to the defiler's body in the center of a great ring of ash, the lifeless remnant of his corrupting power. She stared at Tanok, pointed a short, thick finger at him, and in a high, shrieking voice declared him an exile.

He had been alone for less than a year before he found K'rt and Rr'k. They were only a few years old but nearly full grown. Both were badly injured after an attack by a tribe of elves. Tanok resisted the temptation to kill the creatures or, more sensibly, to move on and leave them behind. Instead, he used the Way to heal them. In return, they came to regard him as one of their own, a clutch-brother.

Tanok ran his finger along the edge of his bone knife. Memories and visions clashed in his mind, unsettling his calm. Elves hated halflings and thri-kreen, warring against them century after century, their tribes clashing in savage battles. In a calmer moment, Tanok might have admitted that some of this elvish hatred was justified, that the elves were prey before they became enemies. But at this moment, he remembered only the tales from his childhood of elves killing halflings, of whole villages exterminated. His visions were all false, he decided, corrupted somehow by the elf. A clear, unprejudiced mind was necessary for true visions. Tanok's mind was clouded by his repugnance at the idea of cutting the elf loose. It was that simple.

Tanok felt the energy of the Way drain out of him. His shoulders sagged and his childlike face grew hard. He would not risk his life freeing another captive. Hunting templars was one thing. It pleased the thri-kreen and served a larger purpose. The elf was another matter entirely. Perhaps she deserved to be a captive. The templars were evil, but so were most of their enemies. And what would he do with her once she was free? How would he

explain keeping her alive to the thri-kreen? True, they considered him to be one of them, their clutch-brother, and they followed his orders more often than not, but they were not his slaves. If he offended them they would leave, and he would be alone again, more of an exile than ever. They might even kill him. He couldn't be sure.

"Tanok!" a voice called softly to him. Rr'k stood over him. His approach had been completely silent. He reached out a claw. "The camp is breaking. They are about to move."

Tanok took hold of Rr'k's claw, letting the thri-kreen lift him in the air and set him on the creature's chitinous back. A pair of leather thongs wound their way around the thri-kreen's abdomen and joined with a strip of inix hide, forming a simple saddle for the halfling to ride on. Tanok knew of no one else who rode thri-kreen in this fashion, and he made sure never to abuse the privilege by demanding it.

The ride was rough. In spite of their considerable grace, the thri-kreens' gait consisted mainly of short sprints interrupted by sudden leaps and shifts in direction. Most days, it was all Tanok could do to hang on.

"One of the wounded ones rides in the cart with the elf," Rr'k said. "The other walks, using his harpoon as a cane. This one is slow and will soon fall behind."

"He'll be our first then," Tanok said. Then, remembering his vision of K'rt wounded and Rr'k frozen, he added, "Do not close in as long as he's able to throw that harpoon. Bring him down with chatkchas."

Rr'k tapped one of the triangular throwing weapons strapped to his side, its crystalline edge finely honed. "Yes, clutch-brother."

Tanok saw K'rt now, waiting for them on the plain. In the distance, he could make out the great lizard, the inix, drawing the wagon, and the huddled shapes of the templars walking alongside. One of them, indeed, lagged behind, limping. Tanok wondered briefly why the templars didn't invoke the power of their sorcerer-king to heal their wounded. Perhaps they were afraid of his displeasure at being disturbed. Or perhaps this wounded man was of too low a rank for the others to bother giving him healing. Watching him, Tanok felt a moment of pity.

The image of the elf rose in his mind again. He forced himself to think about the hunt. He told himself that she was ugly, not worth looking at, with those ridiculously long limbs, that painfully thin frame. And she was evil. All elves were evil. Wasn't that what he had been taught by the tribal elders? Weren't all the tales sung about elves full of treachery and deceit? Why then were the threads of his future drawing him toward her? Why was he plagued by this strange compulsion to free her?

The wounded templar's drift away from the rest of his companions was slow but steady. From a distance, Tanok could see the gap between them widen. He sent K'rt forward to scout the path ahead of the templars, looking for a suitable ambush point. While they waited for him to return, Rr'k and Tanok settled down for a meal.

The ground began to shimmer as the midday heat approached. Tanok allowed himself a little more water than usual, thinking that they would recover the loss from the wounded templar. The heat had hardly any effect on either of the thri-kreen. Rr'k didn't drink any water at all during the meal, contenting himself with leftovers from yesterday's hunt. Tanok ate dried meat and berries captured from the templars. All the while he ate, his mouth hungered for fresh, raw meat.

After lunch, K'rt returned, excited, his speech punctuated by clicks and faint whistles. "There is a large rock, cut in two by the wind. When they pass by, the wounded one will be out of their sight."

Tanok nodded. "Perfect. Can we place ourselves above the templar?"

"The rock is scarred."

"Excellent."

This time, Tanok rode on K'rt's back. As K'rt described the location in detail, Tanok plotted the ambush. It seemed perfect, and yet some inner voice kept reminding him of the elf. Free her, it said. He saw images now of K'rt dead, his limbs broken. He saw Rr'k too, captured, with slave pins set into his carapace, exposing the vulnerable flesh underneath to the prodding of templar daggers. Free her, the voice said.

"After we kill this one," Tanok said, "the hunt will end."

K'rt trembled underneath him. "No," he said.

"We've wasted enough time here. It's pointless to kill all of them. We should be moving on."

K'rt's head turned almost completely around, his purple eyes fixed on Tanok's face, his mandibles held very still. "No," he said. "Templars are evil. You know this. They serve the great defilers, the sorcerer-kings. And then there is the elf."

"We're not hunting the elf. The elf is not a templar."

"She travels with the herd. That makes her prey."

"No!"

Tanok nearly shouted the word. He heard it echo against the approaching rock and cursed himself for his stupidity. K'rt said nothing more until they reached their destination, but Tanok could feel the confusion growing inside the thri-kreen.

It would be dangerous to alienate the thri-kreen. They might cease to think of him as their clutch-brother. That would place him in a very vulnerable position. But the worst part would be losing their companionship, betraying their loyalty. As much as he hated his exile, he couldn't imagine living without them. Who would wake him each morning with the same anxious words? Who would hunt with him, wandering the vast deserts? They were like children sometimes, so open and kind. And other times they were wise in their strange insect way, teaching him lessons about the great variety of life that filled the deserts. He would miss Rr'k and K'rt as much as he still missed the forest.

The rock was worn and cracked. They found a good place for the ambush without any difficulty, a ledge twenty feet above the road, easily wide enough to both conceal them and allow the thri-kreen to use their chatkchas. If necessary, they could leap to the ground and be away within seconds.

K'rt and Rr'k both made their way up. Tanok remained on the ground with his sling, scouting for the approaching templars. As the templars came into view, he

cupped his hands over his mouth and began making low-pitched noises, half whistling, half moaning. These were wind words, special words in the halfling tongue that resembled the sound of wind in the forest. He used them to tell the thri-kreen where the templars were and what they were doing. Unfortunately, the thri-kreen mouth and chitinous claws made it impossible for them to speak wind words in reply. Instead, he saw K'rt stand up for a moment, wave at him with his gythka, then crouch down out of sight.

Tanok drew back into one of the crevices of the rock. He watched the templar scouts march past, their faces strained, the dust of the road thick on their skin. They were afraid. He could see that. And tired. The constant harassment by the thri-kreen was wearing them down. They dragged their feet on the dusty rock, their eyes trying to see everything all at once.

The inix and the wagon came into view. Tanok noticed the wounded templar lying next to the elf. With each jolt of the wagon, he moaned. The elf remained completely indifferent, moving her head slowly from side to side, intensely alert. Her face was ritually scarred and each ear was pierced several times by intricately carved bone earrings. She was a tribal elf, Tanok realized. She ran across the vast deserts with the rest of her kind, tireless, one with the tribe and the harsh land.

I should kill her, Tanok thought. The first chance I get. Put her out of my mind.

As the wagon rolled past, the elf's gaze drifted across his hiding place. He froze, thinking for a moment that she could see him. But that was impossible. A second later, she looked away.

The last of the unwounded templars trudged past. Tanok watched them move out of sight. Several long minutes passed before their prey arrived, limping, leaning heavily on his harpoon, just as Rr'k had said. Tanok spoke more wind words, a few simple low tones to warn the thri-kreen, then eased himself out of his hiding place. He set a stone into his sling and watched the templar's back.

Tanok tried to see how badly the templar was wounded, but it was difficult to tell. The man's feet dragged and he never raised his head. He kept one arm close to his side. His body was heavily cloaked, in spite of the heat.

As the templar approached the rock, Tanok heard the whistle of a pair of chatkchas, then saw the crystalline throwing wedges fly at the templar. Two more flew before Tanok could take a breath. All four fell harmlessly at the templar's feet.

Tanok hesitated, unsure whether to use his sling or to activate one of his mental powers. He decided to try the sling just as K'rt and Rr'k leapt down on the templar, gythkas flashing. The templar cast aside his cloak. Tanok saw a coil of rope fall to the ground just as the templar threw his harpoon and shouted an alarm. The harpoon struck K'rt in the side. Tanok threw the stone from his sling, but, like the chatkchas before it, the missile struck the air just short of the templar and dropped to the ground. Magic. The templars had called on their sorcerer-king after all, Tanok realized.

The templar moved quickly. With a flick of his wrist, he coiled the rope attached to the harpoon around K'rt's neck. His free hand drew a short sword, blocking the blade of Rr'k's gythka. He hardly seemed to notice Tanok was there.

Rr'k knocked the sword blade to one side, then stabbed with his gythka. The templar yanked on the rope once more, pulling K'rt to the ground. Rr'k's blade sliced into the man's side.

More noise. Tanok saw the flash of feathery cloaks approaching. He pressed himself against the rock. He could hear the rhythmic chanting of spells. His morning visions told him what came next. Rr'k would be paralysed, perhaps slaughtered on the spot. Then the templars would move against K'rt.

Did they know he was with the thri-kreen? Tanok didn't wait to find out. He skirted the opposite end of the rock, cursing his visions and cursing himself for deliberately ignoring them.

Two templars were making their way around to the battle site. They seemed surprised to see a halfling running at them. Tanok's bone knife buried itself deep in the first man's thigh. The templar's blood spilled over the knife onto Tanok's arm. He struck again, this time in the templar's chest.

The second templar hesitated. Tanok used the moment to summon the power of the Way. He felt his hand and his knife bond, becoming one. A darkness filled his mind as he leapt at the templar. He became as ruthless and savage as the thri-kreen.

Around the curve of the rock sat the wagon, its passengers lying still. Tanok felt his mind return to him. His heartbeat slowed. He didn't look back to see what had happened to the templar. There was no point.

The wagon, he thought. The elf.

She was conscious. He could see her eyes staring in the direction of the thri-kreen. The templar next to her appeared to be sleeping or dead. Tanok tried to decipher the intentions behind her expressionless face, but he was no mind reader. She might try to kill him the moment he cut her loose. Any sane elf would when confronted with a blood-soaked halfling.

Tanok heard shouts of victory coming from the far end of the rock. He saw the vision again of Rr'k with a blade at his throat. He closed his eyes tightly, shutting out all thoughts. The power of the Way filled him. The fight with the templar had weakened him, but only slightly. He felt his skin tingle. He opened his eyes and watched his flesh change color, becoming grayish brown like the dirt under his feet. He held his waterskin over his head and cut it open, splashing the last few drops of water down on his head. He used the wet leather of the waterskin to wipe away as much of the blood covering him as he could, rubbing dirt into the few patches that remained visible on his skin. Then, with his blade still bonded to his hand, he began to crawl.

The templars dragged the frozen bodies of the thri-kreen toward the wagon. They were still alive, as far as Tanok could tell. Perhaps they intended to question them, or probe their minds. During the course of the hunt, Tanok had planned their attacks to make it appear as though K'rt and Rr'k were only the vanguard of a larger

force of thri-kreen. The templars would want to know where the rest of the thri-kreen were.

Small sharp stones cut into Tanok's knees as he crawled. His nostrils filled with dust. He moved only when he saw that no eyes were looking in his direction. When he stopped moving, he blended almost invisibly into the landscape. He kept the hand that was bonded to his knife tucked under his body, which made crawling that much more difficult. Every so often the blade scraped against him, the rasp of bone against flesh sounding like the shriek of an angry bird.

After what seemed like a dragon's age, the shadow of the wagon passed over him. He let his color-changing power lapse and rested for a moment, slowing his breathing. He could see the elf's feet dangling from the end of the wagon, and a bit of the hemp binding her as well.

Betray me and I'll kill you, he thought. The templars can kill me. I don't care. You will die.

He crawled to the end of the wagon and reached up with his knife. The tough rope resisted the bone blade at first, but then parted as Tanok began sawing at it. The elf shifted her legs slightly, moving the rope into a better position for him to work at it. He wondered if she realized who was setting her free.

When the rope finally fell apart, Tanok bit his lip and grabbed the edge of the wagon. He pulled himself up next to the elf. The wounded templar stirred, but Tanok ignored him. He stared into the woman's face, watching her eyes widen as she took in his dirty face and his knife.

"Listen, elf," he whispered. "I'm a halfling, true, but I'm the one with the knife. If I set you free, you must do all you can to help those two thri-kreen. Otherwise, I'll kill you and let the templars kill me. Do you understand?"

He spoke in the language of Tyr, a common enough tongue in the region. Nothing in her face told him that she understood, until she nodded, slowly, her eyes never leaving his face. "I've seen you," she said. "In my dreams."

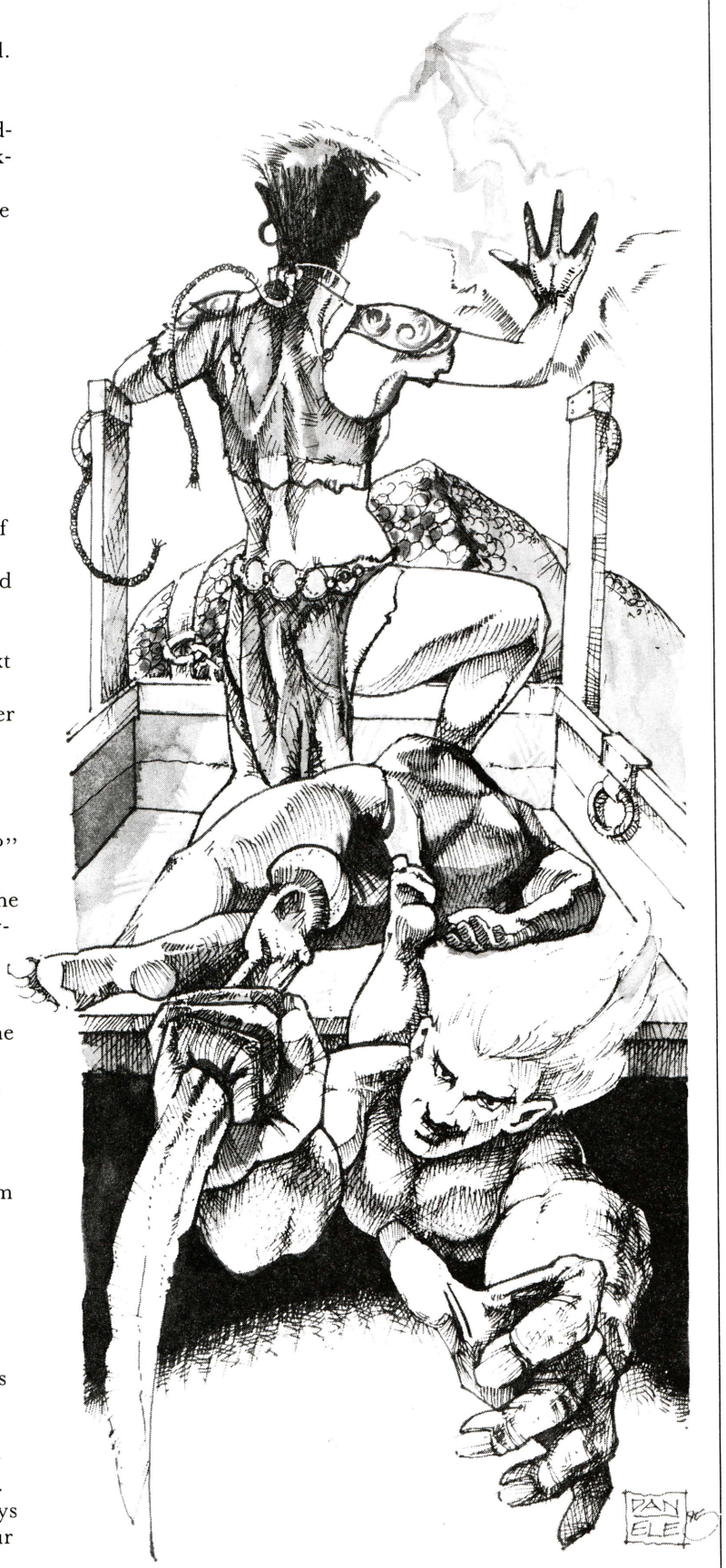
Tanok stared at the elf, unable to move. He heard a shout from behind him. Cursing his life and his exile, he slashed at the elf's bonds. The instant the ropes parted, he turned and jumped at the templar nearest to the wagon, riding him to the ground. Darkness filled his mind again until he heard thunder and was blinded by a blue-white flash of light.

The templars, was his first thought, throwing another lightning bolt. No, not the templars. The flash came from the wagon, from the elf. Tanok felt sick. Another defiler, he thought.

The lightning struck one templar in the chest, then jumped from templar to templar until only the one left guarding the thri-kreen was standing. He pulled a blade and, true to Tanok's vision, put it to Rr'k's throat.

For a moment, Tanok couldn't think, lost in memories of the forest, the dead defiler, the shaman's accusing finger. I'll kill the elf, he thought, but not now, later. He took a breath and opened his eyes. He stared at the templar intently. "Listen to me," he said. "The hunt is over. Walk away now and we'll leave you be. Urik is a few days walk from here. You might survive, and, if you shed your robes, you might even make it through the gates."

The words sounded weak and hollow to Tanok. The



templar ignored them, pressing the point of his knife against Rr'k's carapace and shifting his gaze from Tanok to the elf. The elf stood on the wagon, her hands at her sides. For the first time, Tanok noticed that there was no sign of defiling magic around the wagon. No ash. No blackened, lifeless soil. The elf didn't look at him. She looked ahead, staring not at the templar, Tanok realized, but at K'rt. Her fingers made subtle movements and Tanok could see her lips move as well.

A preserver! A wizard who preserved life energy. Not a defiler at all. The realization freed his mind. He turned back to the templar, his gaze steady. "You see this knife?" he said, holding up his bloody blade, waving it back and forth to draw the templar's attention. "I've killed three of your fellow templars with it. They were fortunate. Their deaths were simple and quick. But my blade can cut slowly as well. Look at it, Templar. If you harm the thri-kreen, you and this blade will become intimate friends. Look at it!"

Tanok knew that the templar understood, if not the words themselves, then the intent behind them. His eyes shifted, almost involuntarily, to Tanok's knife, his own blade dropping away slightly from Rr'k's throat. Out of the corner of his eye, Tanok saw the elf's skin suddenly glow orange and blue. Motes of light filled the air around Rr'k. The templar shoved the knife back against Rr'k's throat, but the blade only scraped the carapace as the thri-kreen pulled away.

A high-pitched shriek cut the air. The templar turned to face K'rt, like Rr'k, freed of the templar magic by the elf's spell. Tanok watched his last vision come true. K'rt spat into the templar's face, paralysing him, then bit deeply into the man's throat.

The elf stood on the wagon, shifting her gaze from the thri-kreen to Tanok. "What now?" she said.

Tanok strained his neck to look up at her, her height exaggerated by the height of the wagon. "You're not a defiler," he said.

"No."

"Are you well enough to travel?"

"As long as I don't have to go another foot in this wagon."

Rr'k came up beside Tanok. K'rt, the drajic harpoon still in his side, sat down hard next to the body of the templar. The elf tensed, her hands ready to perform the gestures of another spell. Tanok put a hand on Rr'k's leg. "The hunt is over, clutch-brother," he said.

"No!"

"Yes! The templar herd has been destroyed. The hunt is over."

Tanok felt the thri-kreen's legs twitch. He wondered for a moment if Rr'k would be able to get to the elf before she could cast her spell. He didn't want to take the chance. "Rr'k," he said, "upon my word as your clutch-brother, I say to you that if this elf becomes prey, then so do I."

Rr'k hesitated. Tanok wondered if he could follow through on his threat, if he could actually fight Rr'k. The thri-kreen turned to him, purple eyes glazed with anger. "Very well, clutch-brother," he said. "The hunt is over."

Tanok turned to the elf. "Go, now."

The elf jumped from the wagon and ran. Tanok watched her shrink into the distance. She moved with such purpose. Was there a tribe out there waiting for her? It occurred to him that he had never found out her name.

His head ached. He let the last vestiges of his mental power lapse. His knife slipped from his hand to the ground. He picked it up and returned it to its sheath. Rr'k stared at him as he walked to K'rt and examined the wound. It looked worse than it was. Some bandaging now, followed by healing after Tanok had some time to rest. That is, if he was allowed to rest and to remain with the thri-kreen.

K'rt stirred as Tanok went to work on the wound. "Is the hunt over?" he said.

"Yes," Tanok said.

Rr'k's shadow fell across his brother's face. Tanok noticed the blade of a gythka not far from his right side. He decided not to say or do anything, to let Rr'k make the decision on his own. If it meant being struck down by the thri-kreen, so be it. Tanok would not become an exile a second time.

K'rt looked up at his brother. "Rr'k," he said. "The hunt was good, wasn't it?"

The gythka blade flashed as Rr'k sheathed it across his back. "Yes, K'rt," he said, staring down at Tanok. "The hunt was good. The hunt was very good." Ω

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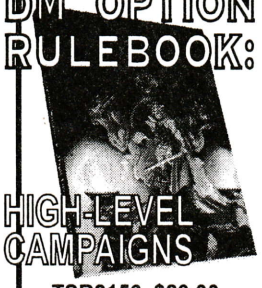

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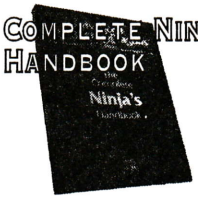

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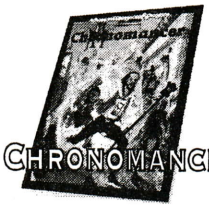

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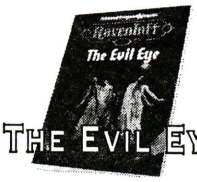

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Do on the cheap

by Ken Whitman

Photography by Charles Kohl

The GEN CON® Game Fair is just days away and most of you have decided, for the fourth year in a row, that you just can't afford it . . . but you're *wrong!* What if I said that you, and three of you closest and demented friends, could go for under $150 each?

Well, as an eight year veteran of the GEN CON Game Fair, I could write a novel about all the craziness I have gotten into (all legal mind you) at practically no cost. But there's no time for old war stories. Copy this page, call your friends, hop in your car and go.

Attend the GEN CON® Game Fair for Less

Lodging

If you and your buddies each pay for one night (August 9-12), you could get some very economical lodging. Call the Greater Milwaukee Convention and Visitors Bureau at 1-800-231-0903 for potential lodging locations, and remember that the farther you stay from the MECCA Center in downtown Milwaukee, the more economical the rooms. Ask if you can get a double room at Marquette University or the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (both will cost you less than $60 a night). Be sure to bring at least two sleeping bags and a few extra pillows, because you never know what might happen.

Admission

You will spend $40 to get in if you pay for all four days. However, if you are strapped for cash and need to save $10-20 you can spend $10 a day instead. You could skip on Thursday (if you can't get off work) or Sunday (which is only two-thirds of a day anyway and saves you $10). Money you save on admission can be used on game tickets.

Game Event Tickets

You will pay an average of $2 per game you play in. However, you can attend several game demos from the major RPG companies in the exhibit area (which are FREE). Also, many seminars are FREE and you can DM or play in any games that take place on the second floor of the MECCA Convention Center in "Open Gaming" for FREE. Make your own fun!

Food

It's best to bring a cooler filled with sandwiches and sodas. You will have to leave your food in the hotel (food is not allowed in MECCA itself, and, besides, coolers are heavy). Chips and other foods that don't spoil easily are recommended. Mom might even pack lunches made from leftovers (at no cost to you). However, if you must eat fast food, there are several burger joints within walking distance. Just ask other veteran GEN CON Game Fair attendees.

Transportation

The most economical way to get to the Game Fair is by car, preferably your buddy's, but your old clunker should work (cross your fingers). If four of you head out, you can split the cost of gas. So, unless you get fewer than 10 miles to the gallon, you should make it to Milwaukee and back for $30-$50 dollars each.

Sunday Is Barter Day

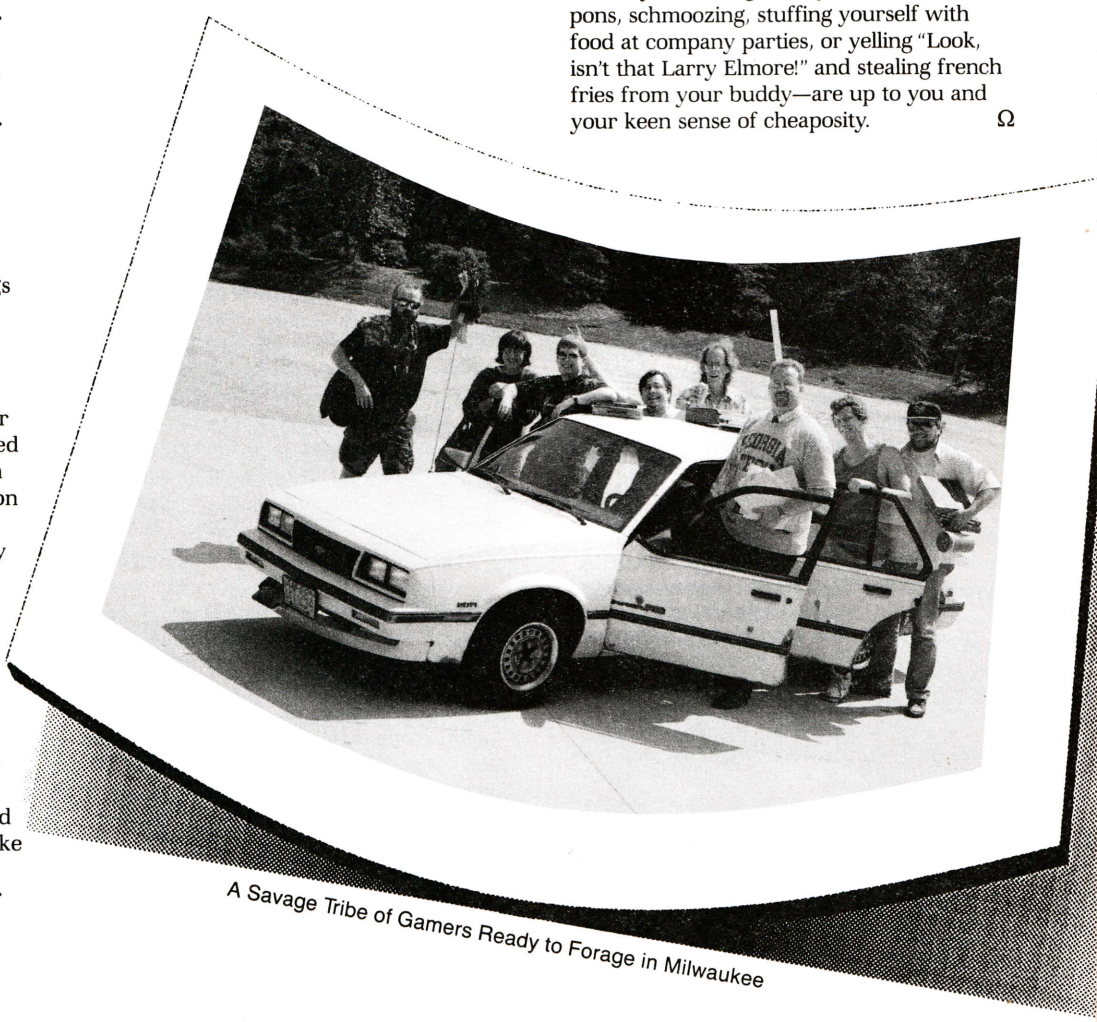
Most companies release new games at the GEN CON Game Fair. So, you should shop around in the exhibit area Thursday, Friday, or Saturday and figure out which one or two games you really need. Then on Sunday around 3:50 P.M., hang around the company booth that has your product and start shouting "All I have is a ten." Most likely, you'll walk away with the game you wanted.

Expenses

$30-$60	Accommodation
$20-40	Admission
$30-50	Gas money
$0-10	Really cool game you have to buy
$0-40	Food
$10	Miscellaneous
$150	Average Cost

Conclusion

Now you understand the basics. Other effective ways of saving money—such as coupons, schmoozing, stuffing yourself with food at company parties, or yelling "Look, isn't that Larry Elmore!" and stealing french fries from your buddy—are up to you and your keen sense of cheaposity. Ω



A Savage Tribe of Gamers Ready to Forage in Milwaukee

Convention Calendar

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. **No** call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

❖ indicates an Australian convention.
✻ indicates a Canadian convention.
✪ indicates a European convention.

Important: DRAGON® Magazine no longer publishes phone numbers for conventions. Publishing incorrect numbers is always possible and is a nuisance to both the caller and those receiving the misdirected call. Be certain that any address given is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that your notice was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please avoid sending convention notices by fax, as this method has not proved to be reliable.

CANGAMES, Aug. 4-6 ✻

This convention will be held at the Chateau Laurier Hotel in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, a painting contest, and auction, and dealers. Write to: CANGAMES, 6930 Sunset Blvd., Greely, Ontario, Canada, K4P 1C5.

CORPSE CON II, Aug. 4-6 **TX**

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson Shoreline in Corpus Christi, Tex. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a dealers room, Japanimation, and an auction. Registration: $5 on site. Write to: GLCC, 5757 S. Staples #2802, Corpus Christi TX 78413.

DALLAS GAME EXPO, Aug. 4-6 **TX**

This convention will be held at the Ramada Hotel Market Center in Dallas, Tex. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, dealers, and animation. Registration: $10 preregistered, $15 on site, $7/day. Write to: Dallas Game Expo, P.O. Box 824662, Dallas TX 75382.

DALLASCON '95, Aug. 4-6 **TX**

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Irving, Tex. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction and a dealers room. Write to: DALLASCON, P.O. Box 867623, Plano TX 75086.

TOLCON XIII, Aug. 5-6 **OH**

This convention will be held at the Scott Park Campus at the University of Toledo, Ohio. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, movies, an auction, and a painting contest. Registration: $8 for the weekend, $5/day. Write to: TOLCON XIII, c/o Mind Games, 2115 N. Reynolds, Toledo OH 43615.

GAMEFEST XVI, Aug. 9-13 **CA**

This convention will be held in the historic Old Towne in San Diego, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include trivia and figure painting. Registration: $20 preregistered until July 31, $30 on site. Write to: GAMEFEST XVI, 3954 Harney St. San Diego CA 92110.

BUBONICON 27, Aug. 11-13 **NM**

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson East in Albuquerque, New Mex. Guests include Harry Turtledove and Simon Hawke. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an art show, an auction, a dance, a costume contest, and a genre cereal taste-off. Registration: $21 preregistered until July 21, $25 on site. Write to: BUBONICON 27, New Mexico SF Conference, P.O. Box 37257, Albuquerque NM 87176-7257.

EURO CON '95, August 18-20 ✪

This convention will be held at Stadthalle in Frankfurt-Zeilsheim, Germany. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include workshops, a video room, and an auction. Write to: Welt der Spiele GmbH, EURO CON, Am Martinszehnten 5, D-60437 Frankfurt, Germany.

MIGSCON XVI, Aug. 18-20 ✻

This convention will be held at the Hamilton Ramada Hotel in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a dealers room. Write to: MIGSCON XVI, P.O. 37013, Barton Postal Outlet, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, L8L 8E9.

STARQUEST '95, Aug. 18-20 **CA**

This convention will be held at the Red Lion Inn in San Jose, Calif. Guests include Michael O'Hare, Walter Koenig, and Kevin

Anderson. Events include role-playing games. Other activities include autograph sessions and anime events. Write to: STARQUEST '95, P.O. Box 56412, Hayward CA 94545 or e-mail: starquest@shakala.com.

DRAGONFLIGHT '95, Aug. 25-27 WA
This convention will be held at the Bellarmine Hall on the Seattle University campus in Seattle, Wash. Events include computer, role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include seminars, an auction, and dealers. Registration: prices vary. Write to: DRAGONFLIGHT '95, P.O. Box 417, Seattle WA 98111-0417.

RAILCON '95, Aug. 25-27 CO
This convention will be held at the Sheraton Hotel West in Lakewood, Col. Activities include a Puffing Billy tournament. Registration: $30. Write to: Train Gamers Association, P.O. Box 461072, Aurora CO 80046-1072.

FOX CON '95, Aug. 28-Sept. 3 IL
This convention will be held at the Arlington Park Hilton in Arlington Heights, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments. Registration: $10/day, $15 for the weekend. Write to: Randy Giesey, 1775 Ashford Circle, Wheeling IL 60090.

DEMI CON 6, Sept. 1-3 MD
This convention will be held at the Sheraton Conference Hotel in Towson, Maryl. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include workshops, an auction, and a miniatures painting contest. Registration: $25 on site. Write to: Harford Adventure Society, c/o The Strategic Castle, 114 N. Toll Gate Road, Bel Air MD 21014.

FOX CON '95
EMPEROR'S BIRTHDAY CON XIV, Sept. 1-3 IL
This convention will be held at the Arlington Park Hilton in Arlington Heights, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: $13 per day, $18 for the weekend. Write to: Randy Giesey, 1775 Ashford Circle, Wheeling IL 60090.

MAGE CON SOUTH X, Sept. 1-3 IA
This convention will be held at the Hilton in Sioux City, Iowa. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, a computer gaming room, a costume contest, dealers, and an auction. Registration: $10 preregistered, $15 on site, $8/day. Write to: MAGECON, P.O. Box 114, Sioux Center IA 51250.

PACIFICON '95, Sept. 1-4 CA
This convention will be held at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Write to: PACIFICON, 10519 Silverwood Way, Rancho Cordova CA 95670.

RIVERCON XX, Sept 1-4 KY
This convention will be held at the Executive West Hotel in Louisville, Ken. Special guests include Philip Jose Farmer, Robert and Juanita Coulson, and Andrew J. Offutt. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include a huckster room, an art show, and a masquerade ball. Registration: $25 preregistered, $35 on site. Write to: RIVERCON, P.O. Box 580009, Louisville KY 40268.

STRATEGICON, Sept. 1-4 CA
This convention will be held at the LAX Hyatt Hotel in Los Angeles, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, computer, and miniatures games. Other activities include a flea market, dealers, and an auction. Registration: $25 preregistered, $30 on site. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510.

CATCON 1, Sept. 2-3 ❁
This convention will be held on the FH Ulm campus, Prittwitzstr. 36 (Catcafe), Ulm, Germany. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments. Write to: Imp's Shop, Zinglerstr. 51, 89077 Ulm, Germany.

KINETICON II, Sept. 8-10 CT
This convention will be held at the Comfort Inn in Darien, Conn. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. Write to: KINETICON II, Connecticut Game Club, P.O. Box 403, Fairfield CT 06430.

BOGGLECON 3, Sept. 9 PA
This convention will be held at the American Legion Hall in Wind Gap, Penn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a raffle, and fund raising events. Registration: $3 per game. Write to: BOGGLECON 3, c/o Mike Griffith, 118 Broadway, Wind Gap PA 18091.

CARDCON 1, Sept. 9 PA
This collectible card game convention will be held at the Wind Gap Fire Hall in Wind Gap, Penn. Other activities include dealers and a card swapping area. Registration: $3, plus event fees. Write to: CARDCON 1, c/o Mike Griffith, 118 Broadway, Wind Gap PA 18091.

TACTICON '95, Sept. 15-17 CO
This convention will be held at Sheraton Hotel in Lakewood, Col. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction, an art show, painting contest, and dealers. Registration: $15. Write to: Denver Gamers Association, P.O. Box 440058, Aurora CO 80044.

REGIMENT, Sept. 16 IN
This convention will be held at the Century Center in Southbend, Ind. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments and dealers. Write to: Mark Schumaker, 1621 Frances Ave., Elkhart IN 46516.

COGCON III, Sept. 22-24 MO
This convention will be held at the University of Missouri Rolla Miner Recreation Building in Rolla, Miss. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a contest, a raffle, and anime. Registration: $8 preregistered, $10 on site. Write to: GEAR, P.O. Box 1939, Rolla MO 65401 or email: gear@albert.nuc.umr.edu.

FIELDS OF HONOR IV, Sept. 22-24 IA
This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson's Hotel in Des Moines, Iowa. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, dealers, and a painting contest. Registration: $10 for the weekend, $5/day. Write to: FIELDS OF HONOR, 6501 Douglas Ave., Urbandale IA 50322.

CAPITALICON X, Sept. 23-24I IL
This convention will be held at Prairie Capital Convention Center in Springfield, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events, tournaments, and an auction. Registration: $10. Write to: John Holtz, 400 East Jefferson St., Springfield IL 62701.

ANDCON '95, Sept. 28-Oct. 1 OH
This convention will be held at the Seagate Convention Center in the Radison Hotel in Toledo, Ohio. Guests include Scott Douglas, Frank Mentzer, and Robin Wood. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction, computer gaming, and interactive events. Registration: $24.95 Write to: ANDCON '95, P.O. Box 1740, Renton WA 98057 or e-mail: andon@aol.com.

CON OF THE LIVING DEAD
Sept. 29-Oct. 1 TN
This convention will be held at the Best Western Airport Hotel in Memphis, Tenn. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments and dealers. Registration: $20 preregistered, $25 on site. Write to: Chris Maddox, Memphis Games & Hobbies, 3939 Summer Ave., Memphis TN 38122.

NECRONOMICON '95
Sept. 29-Oct. 1 ❖
This convention will be held at the Newton High School of the Performing Arts in Sydney, Australia. Events include role-playing and card games. Write to: NECRONOMICON '95, 12 Mason St., Parramatta NSW, Australia 2150.

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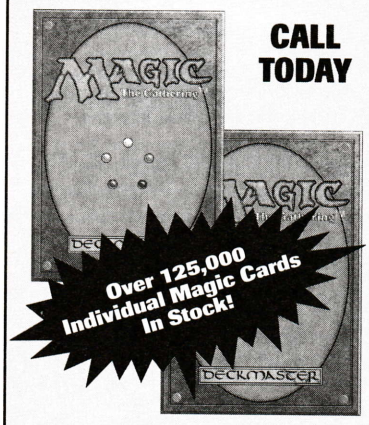

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SILVERCON 4, Sept. 29-Oct. 1 NV

This convention will be held at the Best Western Mardi Gras Inn, Las Vegas, Nev. Guests include Roger Zelazny and Bob Tucker. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction, dealers, films, and a banquet. Registration: $20 preregistered, $25 on site. Write to: SILVERCON 4, c/o Aileen Forman, P.O. Box 95941, Las Vegas NV 89193.

DIRE CONSEQUENCES III, Oct. 6-8 CT

This convention will be held at the Sheraton in Waterbury, Conn. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events and tournaments. Registration: $20. Write to: DC III, P.O. Box 251, Bristol CT 06011.

GAMIN' THE VALLEY '95, Oct. 6-8 PA

This convention will be held at the West Side Mall in Edwardsville, Penn. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, a comic book show, and a SF and sports card show. Registration: $10. Write to: GAMIN' THE VALLEY, P.O. Box 2017, Wilkes-Barre PA 18702 or email: jauftin@aaent.microserve.com.

HEXACON '95, Oct. 6-8 NC

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Market Square in High Point, North Carolina. Guests include Tim Olsen, Tony DiTerlizzi, and David "Zeb" Cook. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events and tournaments. Registration: $15 preregistered, $20 on site. Write to: HEXACON, P.O. Box 4 EUC UNCG, Greensboro NC 27412.

QUAD CON '95, Oct. 6-8 IA

This convention will be held at the Palmer Alumni Auditorium in Davenport, Iowa. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, dealers, a miniatures painting contest, and an auction. Registration: $15 preregistered, $20 on site. Write to: QUAD CON 95, The Game Emporium, 3213 23rd Ave., Moline IL 61265.

BAY GAMES '95, Oct. 13-15 MD

This convention will be held at the Best Western Maryland Inn in Laurel, MD. Guests include Bryon Wackwitz and John Staton. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments. Registration: $17 preregistered, $25 on site. Write to: BAY GAMES '95, P.O. 883, College Park MD 20741 or email: avatar@wam.umd.edu.

CONTACT 13, Oct. 13-15 IN

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Airport in Evansville, Ind. Special guests include Dr. Bill Breuer and Naomi Fisher. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an auction, panels, and a masquerade ball. Registration: $17 preregistered, $22 on site. Write to: CONTACT 13, P.O. Box 3894, Evansville IN 47737.

INTERCON '95, Oct. 13-15 ✻

This convention will be held at the Kamloops Exhibition Complex in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, movies, and a masquerade ball. Write to: INTERCON '95, 1021 McGill Road, Kamloops BC, Canada, V2C 6H4.

NECRONOMICON '95, Oct. 13-15 FL

This convention will be held at the Westshore Hotel in Tampa, Flor. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a masquerade, and an art show. Registration: $18 preregistered, $25 on site. Write to: NECRONOMICON '95, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569 or email: CompuServe 74273,1607.

TOTALLY TUBULAR CON III Oct. 13-15 CA

This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Fullerton, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events. Registration: $25 preregistered, $30 on site. Write to: TOTALLY TUBULAR, P.O. Box 18791, Anaheim CA 92871 or email: partdragon@aol.com.

THE WESTERN CHALLENGE '95 Oct. 13-15 ✻

This convention will be held at the University of Saskatchewan campus in Saskatoon, Canada. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and an auction. Registration: $3 per event. Write to: WESTERN CHALLENGE, Apt 318-1311, Temperance Street, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, S7N 0P5.

ADVENTURE GAMEFEST '95 Oct. 20-22 OR

This convention will be held at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Ore. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction and a miniatures painting contest. Registration: $18 for the weekend, $10/day. Write to: Adventure Games Northwest, LLC, 6517 NE Alberta, Portland OR 97218 or email: DCBS85D@prodigy.com.

SIBCON 95, Oct. 28 PA

This convention will be held at the Days Inn Conference Center in Butler, Penn. Events include role-playing, board, card, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events, dealers, and demonstrations. Registration: $5 preregistered, $7 on site. Write to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003.

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NORWESCON	Seattle, WA	April 6 - 9	*SAN DIEGO COMIC CON*	San Diego, CA	July 27 - 30
WELSH CON	Cardiff, Wales	April 8	*DRAK CON*	Aberdeen, Scotland	August 19 - 20

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RUMBLINGS

You can send us news, press releases, announcements, and gossip using the Internet at TSR.mags@genie.geis.com. We welcome your comments at Rumblings, DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva WI, 53147, U.S.A.

TSR, Ground Zero Productions, and **MCA/Universal** will be producing a new made-for-television, high-action fantasy adventure, movie and TV series called **Wildspace.** It's a strange brew of animation, live action, and hot computer effects.

"Wildspace will look like a live comic-book," says Flint Dille, President of Ground Zero Productions, "combining live-action, adventure, animation, and advanced computer-generated images." Jeff Segal, President of MCA/Universal adds, "It's the most revolutionary series we've ever undertaken."

The show follows the adventures of brave medieval warriors traveling throughout the galaxy on sailing ship-like vessels while battling space pirates, dragons, and a slew of nasty villains. To coincide with the TV show, TSR will release a *Wildspace* game and follow with books. There's even talk of *Wildspace* action figures and a possible interactive attraction for Universal Studio Tours in California and Florida! How much of all this will appear and how much is just speculation? Time will tell—the series debuts sometime next year.

It's been nine long years, but Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman finally return to the **DRAGONLANCE®** world with *Dragons of Summer Flame,* due out in November. Is Raistlin dead? Is Ansalon safe from the army of darkness? Find out this November!

Speaking of TSR novels . . . the first PLANESCAPE™ novel will be released in January. It's the first in a trilogy by TSR veteran **Rob King** (*Heart of Midnight, Carnival of Fear*). The book is called *Blood Hostage,* and it follows the exploits of two cousins, Aereas and Nina, as they enter the bizarre and twisted worlds of the planes. The book is the first of a PLANESCAPE trilogy.

Tim Beach, the TSR designer best known for his work on the RED STEEL® campaign setting, has left the company to pursue other interests. He was known around the office as "Dr. Monster" for his incredible reference encyclopedia, which contained every monster ever published by TSR. Tim's creative genius will be missed, and we wish him the best of luck with his future plans.

FASA has just announced the promotion of **Jill Lucas** to Chief Operating Officer. Lucas will be taking on the duties of long-time FASA stalwart **Sam Lewis,** who is moving to **Kesmai,** a FASA licensee for online games. Lucas has been with FASA for seven years and was previously the vice president of sales and marketing.

The first consumer virtual reality system is finally being produced. **Sense8 Corporation** and **Intergraph Computer Systems** have reached an agreement to offer a bundled virtual reality system for the PC which will include WorldToolKit VR software and graphics hardware. Save your money kids—the system costs about $8,300.

Steve Jackson Games has reached an agreement with Geekware Inc. to produce a card database and management program for the **Illuminati: New World Order*** trading card game. Fans of the game (and the Gnomes of Zurich) have so many cards that they need a computer to keep track of them. Using the INWO program, players will be able to build decks on the computer (and it's easier than using the actual cards). Geekware already makes a card database program for Magic: the Gathering. In addition, t-shirts and hats with the famous eye-in-the-pyramid logo will soon be available.

We don't know at press time whether it's a good game, but it sure should be pretty: The STAR QUEST* trading card game from Comic Images will feature art by **Frank Frazetta, Michael Whelan, the Hildebrandts,** and fifteen other great artists—in a total set of 325 cards. It will be released at **DragonCon** in Atlanta, Georgia, in mid-July.

Another new collectible card game is hitting the shelves called **Realms Arcana.** The game splices together card, role-playing, and board games, and the starter box contains two medallions, a six-sided die, and a cool-looking **Ral Partha** miniature.

Acclaim Comics released two new mini-series of MAGIC: TG* comics; **Wayfarer** and **Antiquities War,** along with a single-issue story, **Nightmare.** *Wayfarer* is written by Jeff Gomez (formerly of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® comic book) and penciled by Val Mayerik, with covers by Mike Kaluta. *Nightmare* is written by Hilary Bader, who is best known for scripting episodes of *Star Trek: TNG* and *Star Trek: Voyager.* The book is penciled by Anthony Castrillo. *Antiquities* is written by Jerry Prosser and penciled by Paul Smith and Phil Hester. As always, the comics will include a play-by-play analysis on the cards that are included with each issue.

Moordam Comics (formerly Substance Comics) announced that it will cease operations for a least a year, due to the unstable marketplace. This decision will affect all of the company's products including *Faerie King #1,* which was due out in May. Readers interested in maintaining contact with Moordam Comics and its creative staff can write to them at: Moordam Comics, P.O. Box 1260, Youngstown, OH 44501.

The **AT&T ImagiNation Network** will introduce 10 new multiplayer games to their network this summer. These include a simulated WWI air combat game called **Free-For-All Red Baron,** and **Football Online,** the first online game licensed by the **NFL** Player's Association. The network will also offer bulletin boards, personal ads, and online chats.

Speaking of football, you know those big burly jocks who always pick on everybody? Well, it's time to turn the tables and boss the jocks—take charge of your own football team! Precedence is developing a new collectible trading card game (yes, another one) called **Gridiron.** It's a rough-and-tough American football league where only the strong survive to reach retirement. Each print run will feature a unique mix of rare cards, most of which will not be reprinted. The game will be released before the end of the year.

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*indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc.

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Aerial Combat over Athas

A New Age Dawns for the DARK SUN® Campaign

by Bill Slavicsek

Artwork by Stephen Daniele

There's a new DARK SUN® campaign setting hurtling toward your store shelves even as you read this. As I write this, my design work on the upcoming boxed set has been completed and my editor is busy polishing the text. It'll arrive in stores a few short months from now, and then the excitement will really kick in.

You probably have some questions, especially if you're a fan of the original campaign or if you've ever been tempted to find out more about the world of the crimson sun. I'll try to answer all your questions, as well as provide some insight into the creative process behind AD&D® game's savagely brutal campaign setting. Let's start with some background.

What is the DARK SUN Setting?

The DARK SUN campaign setting debuted as a boxed set in the fall of 1991. It was the work of many talented individuals, primarily designers Timothy B. Brown and Troy Denning. The duo decided to create a world unlike anything ever done before for the AD&D game system. What they designed, and what artists like Brom and Tom Baxa depicted in marvelous detail, was a brutal world of savage adventure called Athas. The trademarked title comes from the world's sun, a dark red orb that hangs high in the burning sky.

The driving force behind the design was to make the campaign different. The designers didn't want just another variation of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, for example, but instead strove to create a world where all of the basic tenets of fantasy role-playing were turned inside-out and twisted into something new. So, instead of a lush world of forests and grasslands, Athas is a dying desert of a world. Magic, instead of being a benevolent power practiced by scholarly wizards in isolated towers, is a wild and hungry beast that ravages the land.

In no other AD&D campaign is the concept of "survival of the fittest" demonstrated so well. Not only must player characters contend with a harsh, punishing environment and a scarcity of resources, they must also deal with fierce monsters unlike any seen before. For this reason, the rules let PCs start at 3rd level, and new, powerful races have been included to help boost the chances of survival—races like the half-dwarf/half-human muls, the insectoid thri-kreen, and the huge half-giants.

The differences don't end there. DARK SUN is the first AD&D campaign to incorporate psionics into its very essence. Everything on Athas, from a fragile desert flower to a towering, carnivorous monster, has the potential to command psionic powers. Moreover, every PC is either a psionic wild talent or a full-fledged psionicist. Powerful mental abilities give characters the edge they need to handle the ordeals of everyday life beneath the crimson sun. Of course, they'll need much more to handle the very *worst* things lurking in the Athasian wastes, but at least it's a start.

After finishing the design of the original boxed set, Tim Brown moved over to become the Director of Creative Services for TSR, Inc., while Troy Denning left to pursue a career as a novel writer and produce the Prism Pentad series of DARK SUN novels. The DARK SUN line, both on the game side and in the book department, continued to define the world they devised, releasing more than 30 products over the next four years.

Why a New Boxed Set?

Change has been an integral part of the DARK SUN campaign from the moment the boxed set was opened and the first player characters were rolled up. The first adventure and the first novel both featured a pivotal event that significantly changed the material presented in the boxed set. King Kalak, sorcerer-king of Tyr, was killed, and the city became the first bastion of freedom in a world of slavery and tyranny.

The initial campaign setting, an area of land known as the Tyr Region, was explored and detailed from one side to the other. From the slave tribes that roamed the deserts to the mysterious Valley of Dust and Fire east of the Silt Sea's shores, we examined the land and its inhabitants. Time advanced, especially in the novel series, for Athas wasn't a static world that remained the same from year to year. By the final book in the Prism Pentad and the most recent game releases (*City by the Silt Sea* and *Thri-Kreen of Athas*), 10 years of campaign time had passed. The changes wrought by those passing years were significant. The Dragon, the worst scourge known to the world, was destroyed. Three additional sorcerer-kings were toppled. An ancient threat returned from the ruins of Giustenal. There were also natural disasters, like earthquakes and alterations to the weather patterns. A huge rain storm appeared over the Valley of Dust and Fire, and new threats from beyond the Tyr Region began to manifest themselves. After all this, the material presented in the original boxed set was sorely outdated. A new boxed set was needed to bring the campaign back in line and give it a new core.

Change wasn't the only motivation for the revised and expanded campaign setting, though. Few secrets were left to uncover and few geographical areas remained to be explored from the original material. The setting needed to be expanded. From the beginning, mysteries were established that demanded a closer look. What waited beyond the borders of the Tyr Region? What did the rest of the world look like beyond the realms of the seven city-states? More than the physical descriptions, there were also cerebral mysteries begging to be solved. The history of Athas, for example, loomed in the background, hidden but tantalizing everyone with hints of the ancients.

Finally, the scores of supplements had introduced new rules, new character types, new options for player character races, and a slew of other game-related information that deserved to be incorporated into the core DARK SUN rules book. In short, it was time to take the campaign world to the next level.

What's In It?

The revised and expanded DARK SUN campaign setting comes with a ton of material. Here's a quick preview:

- **The Wanderer's Chronicle:** 128 pages detailing the world of Athas, featuring new locations like the Jagged Cliffs, the Last Sea, the Kreen Empire, and the Dead Land, as well as updated material from the original *Wanderer's Journal*.
- **Rules Book:** 96 pages full of revised rules and new mechanics designed to make the action more brutal and the adventure more savage, with new player character races like aarakocras and pterrans, expanded rules for defilers and preservers (the wizards of Athas), and revised ability score tables.
- **The Way of the Psionicist:** 32 pages detailing a new, streamlined, complete-in-this-box psionics system designed especially for DARK SUN campaigns. This is compatible with the psionics system presented in *Player's Option: Skills and Powers*.
- **Mystery of the Ancients:** 32 pages of adventure that kicks off the new campaign in spectacular fashion.
- **DARK SUN DM Screen:** 8-panel gatefold featuring all of the tables a DM needs to run a DARK SUN session, all on one convenient-to-use stand-up screen.
- **Poster Maps:** Three full-color poster-sized maps, including a close-up of the Tyr Region and an expanded view of the lands to the north, south, and west—eight times the area of the original campaign!

Other Important Questions

What's Different?
The political climate has changed. Many of the original movers and shakers have been eliminated, new villains have appeared on the scenes, and the player characters have a real chance to affect the world by their actions. In short, the goals of the player characters have been expanded as we've thrown open the possibilities of play. *The environment* is slowly changing, thanks to a limited greening process introduced in the novel series. In addition, new terrain types are introduced that add to the alien feel and brutal nature of Athas.

What's New?
There's more land to explore, as the known world has been expanded to eight times its original size. New player character races and classes are introduced. The psionics system is new, easier-to-use, and complete in the boxed set. We've abandoned the flip-book adventure format and returned to a more traditional adventure presentation that still has unique elements that make it a DARK SUN adventure.

What's the Same?
Savagery: Athas remains a savage, brutal world designed for the most powerful player characters.

Alienness: Athas is unlike any other AD&D campaign world, with strange terrain, unique inhabitants, and a savage attitude.

New takes on familiar themes: Athas is home to elves, dwarves, and halflings, but they're far removed from the traditional versions everyone is familiar with. There's wizardry, but the way it works is tied to the very fabric of reality. There's priestly magic, but with no gods to power it, the magic is tied to the elements. Plus, psionics remain an integral part of the world, a core concept of the campaign setting.

What Should Fans of the Original Look Forward To?
Answers: The secrets of the ancients, the history of the world, and how the events of the novel series ties into the role-playing campaign are revealed in brutal detail.

Rules Updates: We've fixed problems, filled holes, clarified vague items, and put everything into a clearer, easier-to-use format. Plus, we've gathered all the best new rules from preceding DARK SUN products and added some new rules that were deemed necessary for the campaign.

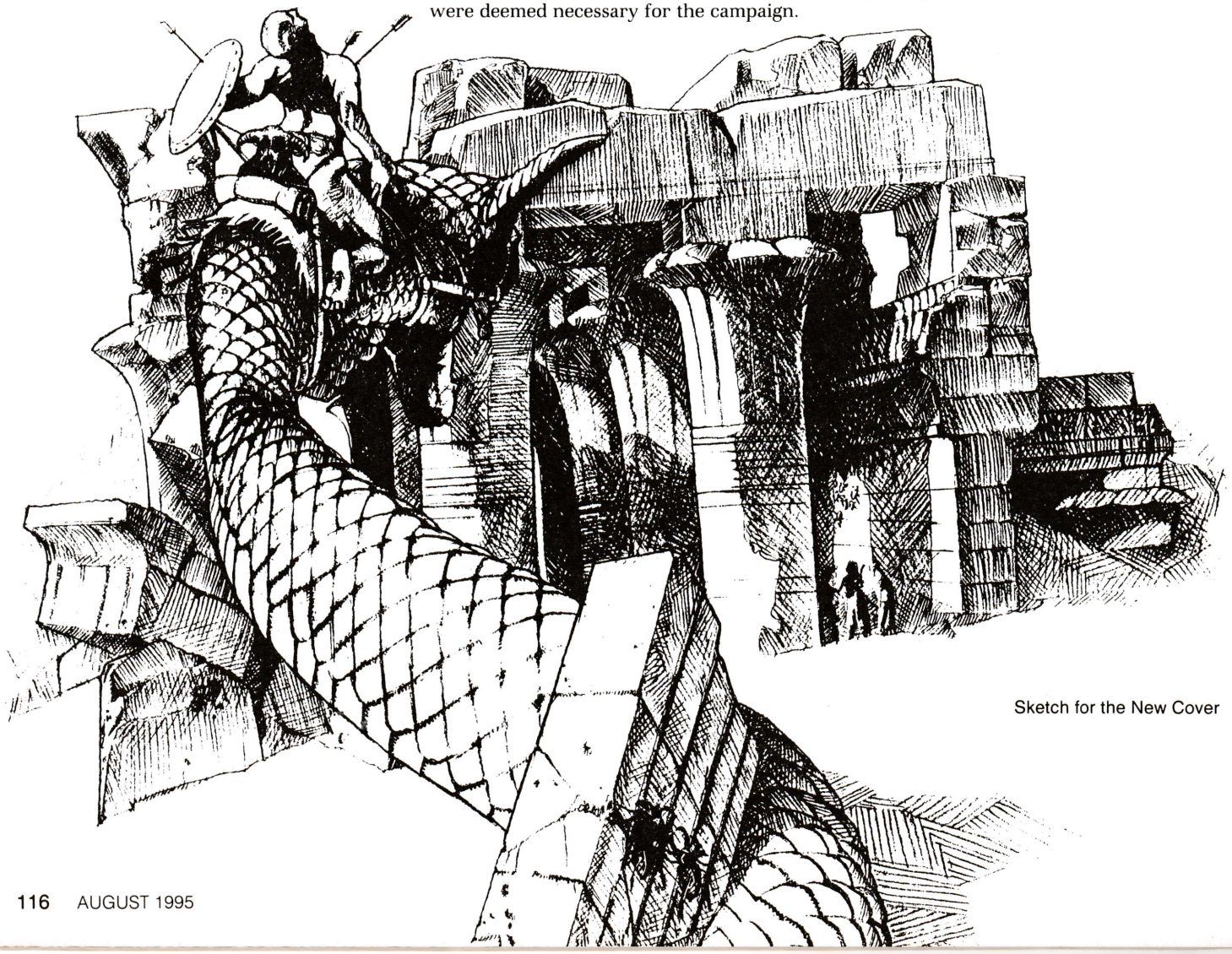
More Room: The world gets bigger—way bigger. This gives us plenty of room to develop over the course of our new vision for the setting's development while leaving DMs lots of room to develop as they see fit.

A Greater Emphasis on Role-Playing: We're keeping the level of power high, but concentrating on showing you how to role-play in this savage, alien world.

New Story Lines: Things in the Tyr Region have really been shaken up, plus there are things happening to the north and south of the Tyr Region that will make even the strongest half-giant warrior tremble in fear—not to mention the terrifying Kreen Empire to the west!

What's Next

As you might expect, this is only the tip of the new Athasian iceberg. Following quickly on the heels of the new boxed set is *The Windriders of the Jagged Cliffs,* the first in the "Wanderer's Chronicle" series of accessories detailing the new locations presented in the revised and expanding campaign setting. From there, new products will appear throughout the next few years, building toward a pivotal event that will make Athas an even deadlier, intensely different kind of game world. Stick with us. The savage adventure is just beginning. Ω



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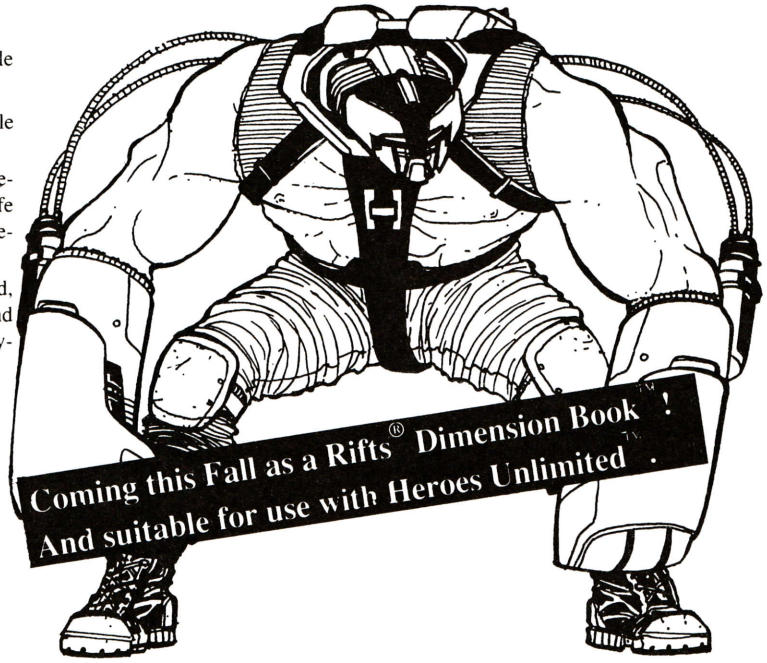

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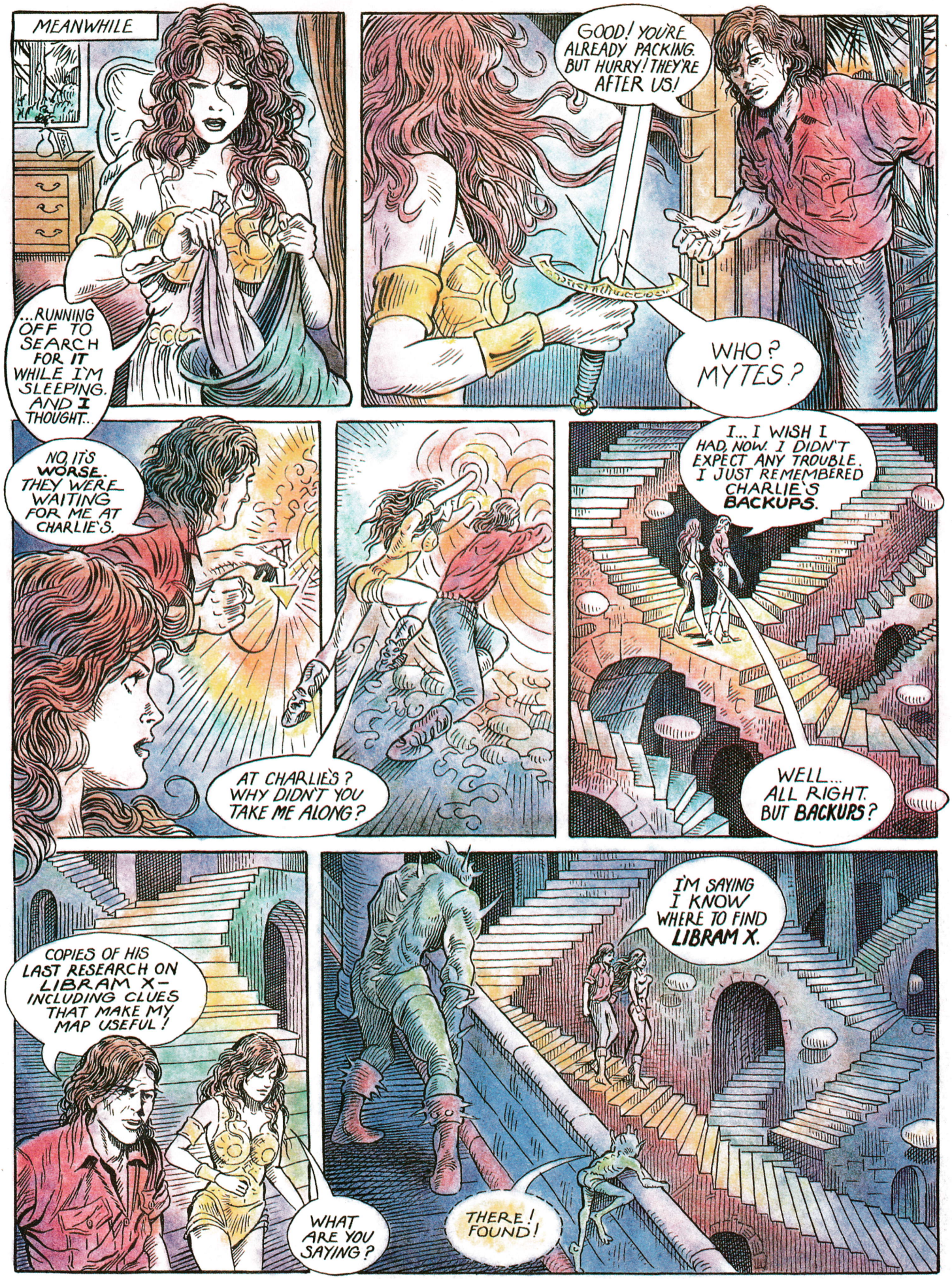
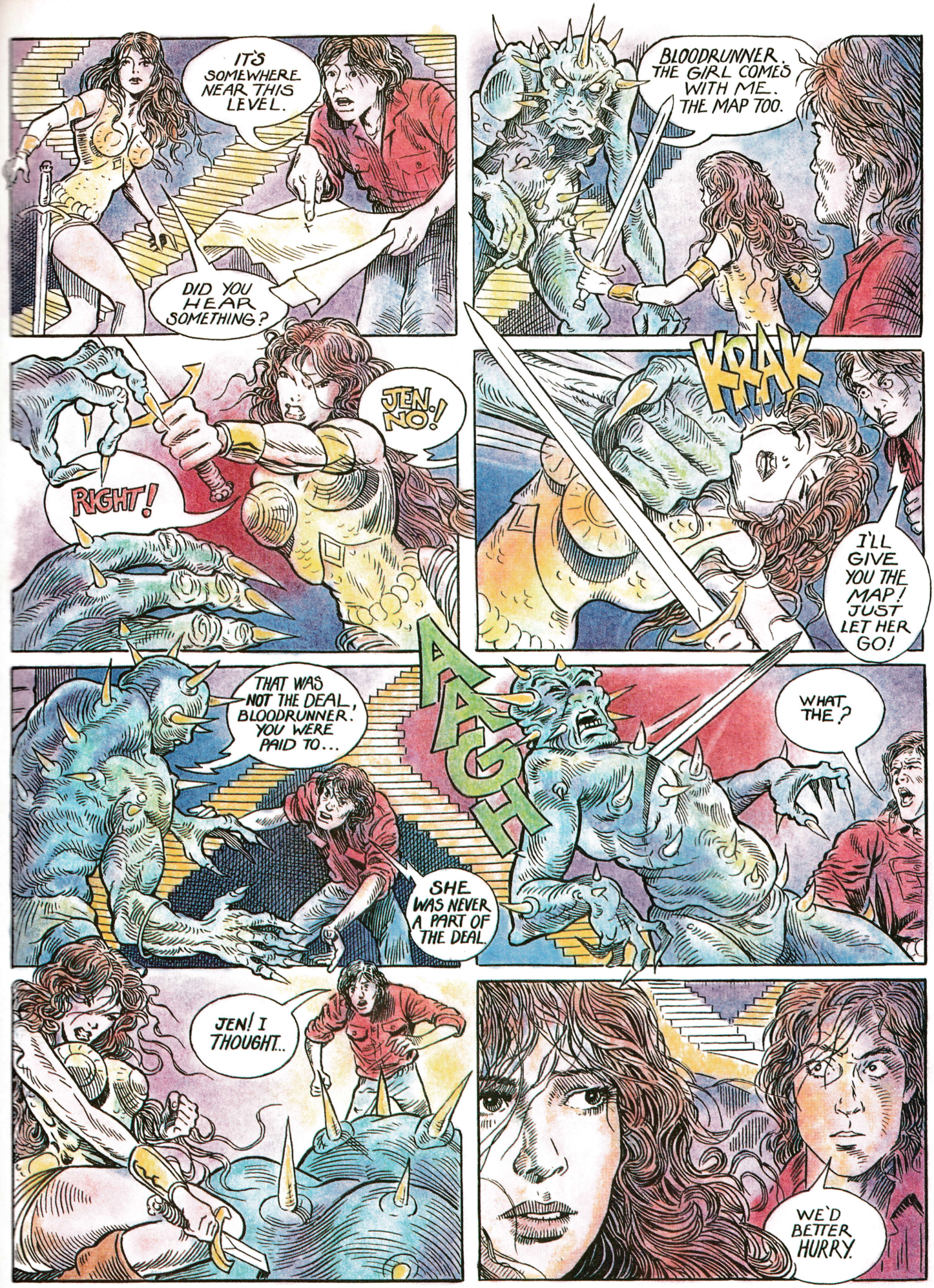
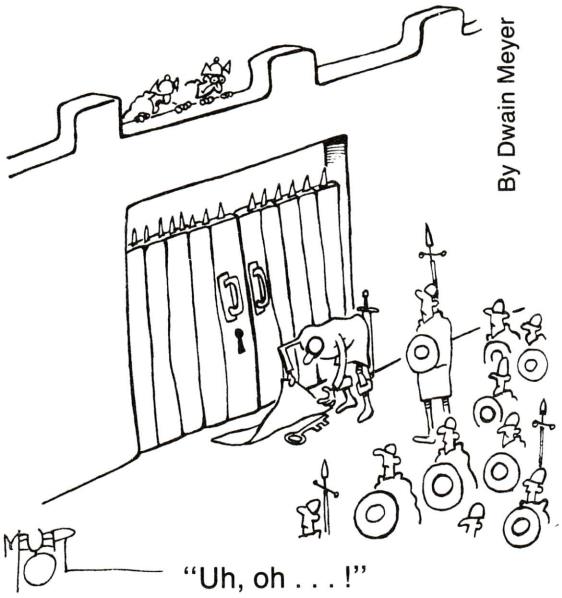
THE STORY THUS FAR: AFTER TRACKING DOWN THE LAWBOY AGENTS WHO KILLED CHARLIE, JEN AND THE MAN SHE BELIEVES TO BE ACE BLOODRUNNER, TOOK A BREAK FROM THEIR SEARCH FOR LIBRAM X. OTTO, SUSPICIOUS OF THIS "ACE," FELL INTO A TRAP.
Libram X
STORY DAVE GROSS
ART BOB LESSL
OTTO!
GROAN
ACE? IS IT REALLY YOU?
CLANK
OF COURSE IT'S REALLY ME. WHO ELSE?
OH, NO!
TELL ME EVERYTHING FROM THE BEGINNING...
RIGHT AFTER WE FOUND YOU WITH CHARLIE'S BODY...
CHARLIE'S DEAD?
OK, I'LL START FROM THE OTHER BEGINNING...
WHY DO WE KEEP THEM ALIVE?
WE MAY HAVE NEED OF THEM. HE DOESN'T TRUST THE OTHER BLOODRUNNER.
AND ACE IS THE ONLY OTHER ONE WHO...
LOOKS LIKE THE BOSS HAS TROUBLE WITH HIS BOSS.


MEANWHILE
...RUNNING OFF TO SEARCH FOR IT WHILE I'M SLEEPING. AND I THOUGHT..
GOOD! YOU'RE ALREADY PACKING. BUT HURRY! THEY'RE AFTER US!
WHO? MYTES?
NO, IT'S WORSE. THEY WERE WAITING FOR ME AT CHARLIE'S.
AT CHARLIE'S? WHY DIDN'T YOU TAKE ME ALONG?
I... I WISH I HAD, NOW. I DIDN'T EXPECT ANY TROUBLE. I JUST REMEMBERED CHARLIE'S BACKUPS.
WELL... ALL RIGHT. BUT BACKUPS?
COPIES OF HIS LAST RESEARCH ON LIBRAM X— INCLUDING CLUES THAT MAKE MY MAP USEFUL!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I'M SAYING I KNOW WHERE TO FIND LIBRAM X.
THERE! FOUND!

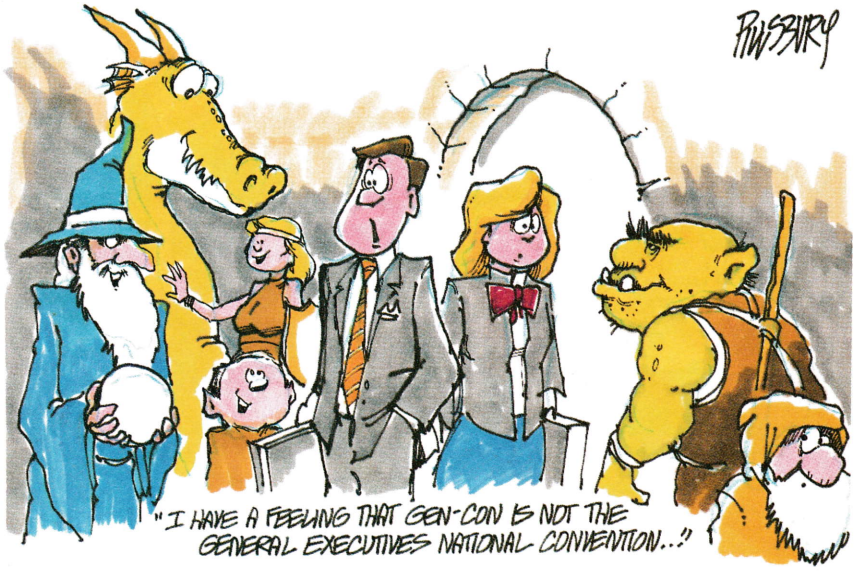

IT'S SOMEWHERE NEAR THIS LEVEL.
DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?
BLOODRUNNER. THE GIRL COMES WITH ME. THE MAP TOO.
JEN. NO!
RIGHT!
KRAK
I'LL GIVE YOU THE MAP! JUST LET HER GO!
THAT WAS NOT THE DEAL, BLOODRUNNER. YOU WERE PAID TO...
AAGH
WHAT THE?
SHE WAS NEVER A PART OF THE DEAL.
JEN! I THOUGHT...
WE'D BETTER HURRY.

Dragonmirth



By Dwain Meyer

"Uh, oh . . . !"

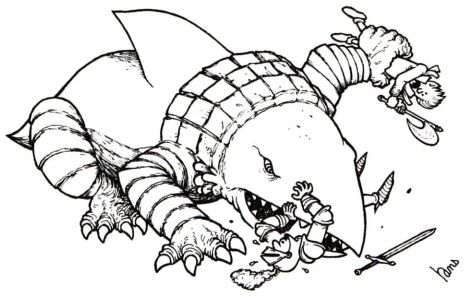


By Joseph Pillsbury

"Look, I really think you guys are abusing our 'Deliver Anywhere' policy!"

By Aaron Williams

"That's it, men!
Just keep him busy while
I unpack my bulette-proof vest!"



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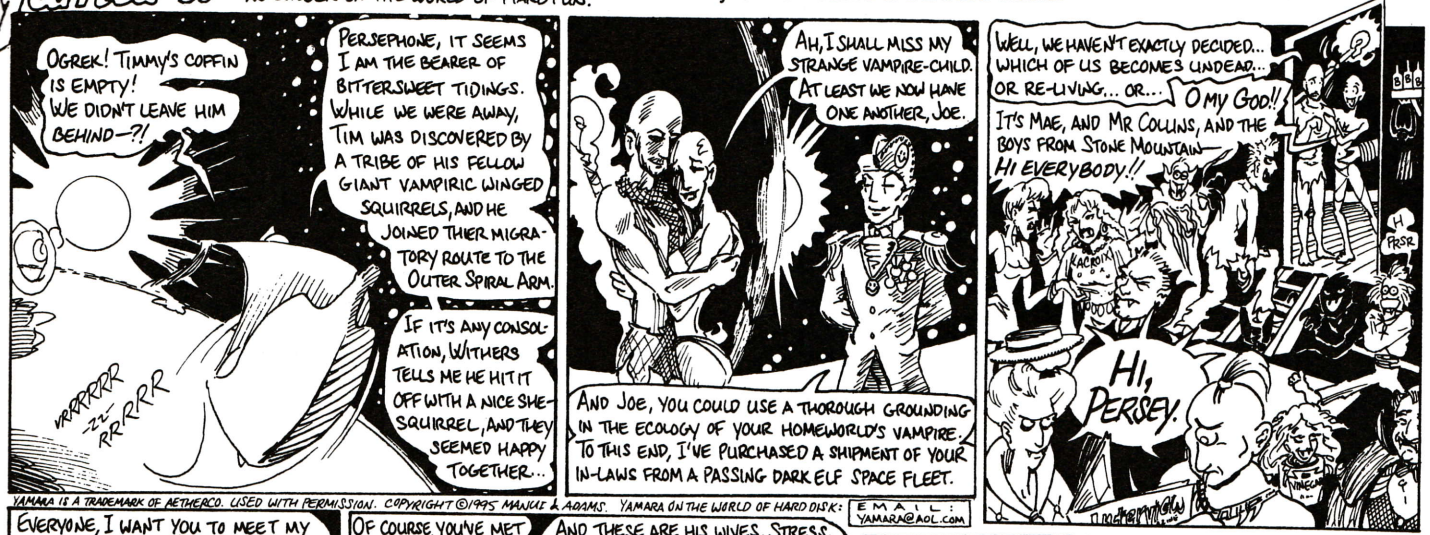

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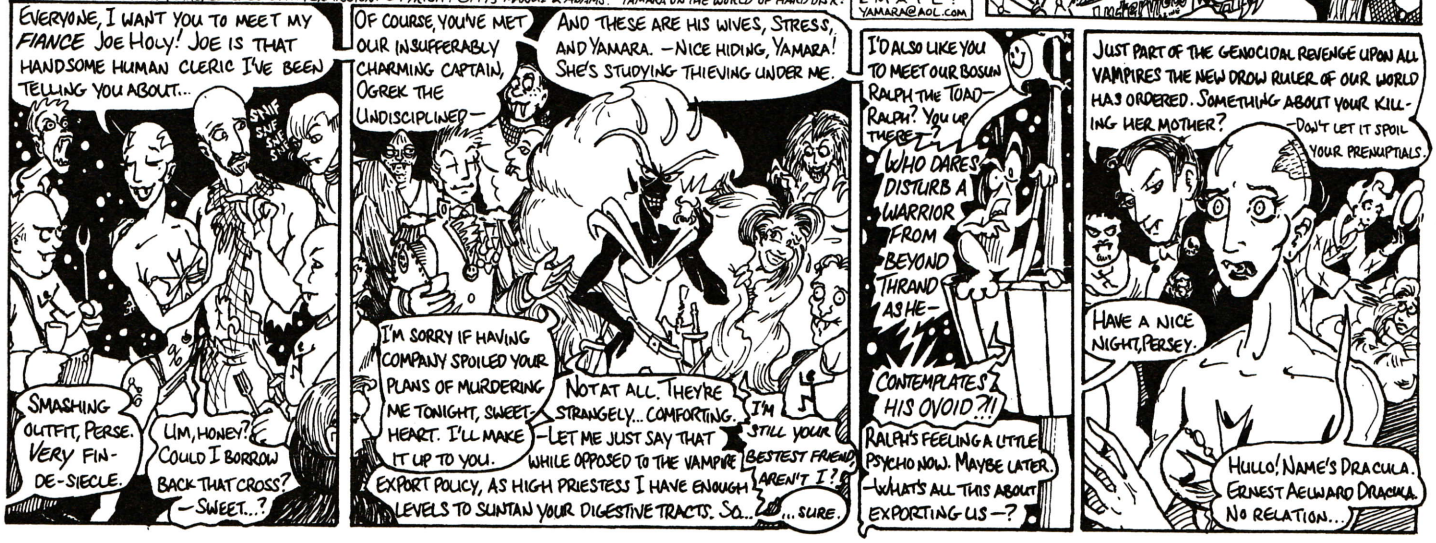

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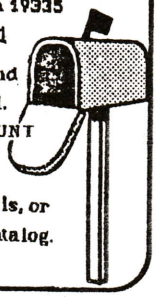

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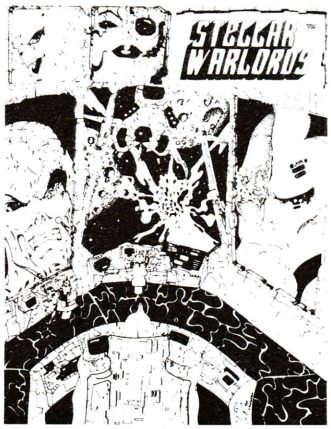

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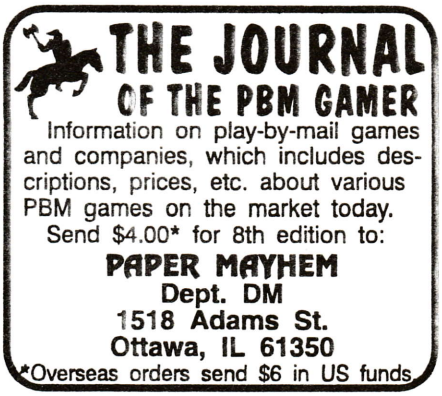

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Miniatures painting . . . lost in neon?

©1995 by Ken Carpenter

Photography by Don Witmer, painting by Ken Carpenter, Alexander Bond, and John Knox. Some photography courtesy of Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.

Deelah with Sabertooth (Ral Partha)

From the Forge

I've got a gripe! (Oh, not YOU, Ken!?). No, really, I do. And it's not just mine, because I've heard a dozen experienced painters and modelers harping about the same thing. It can be summed up in one question—"What's been happening to miniatures painting contests?!" In the last few years there has been a big change (not for the better) and it's driving some excellent painters away from competition.

Once upon a time, painting contests were rather drab, with gobs of historical figures and a few (now everybody raise your noses and sniff) fantasy and science fiction figures. Back then technical proficiency and skill were of paramount importance. Subtle shading, highlighting, and realism were respected by the community at large. Now it seems that coloring and contrast have replaced subtlety and quality.

With Games Workshop's overwhelming presence in the miniatures gaming market came a huge influx of new miniatures gamers just aching to try out their paints. Obviously they'd been inspired by the incredibly painted figures done by Mike McVey, GW's chief painter and among the best in the industry.

Ordinarily this would be a great thing for competitive painting, with excited new painters rushing to test their skills against more experienced enthusiasts. Unfortunately, it seems that painters and judges have traded quality for jump-off-the-shelf contrast. Traditional painting techniques and coloring, as we know them, have begun to decay. The result? Winners in painting contests are no longer the best painted figures, but rather the figures with the brightest colors.

I've attended numerous contests where nearly every ribbon winner was brightly colored. Some of the winners were deserving but some absolutely were not. Figures that I would have considered excellent didn't stand a chance because they didn't jump off the shelf with stark contrast or bright colors. Something is wrong when incredibly painted, well blended figures are passed over for adequately painted, but more colorful figures.

Don't misunderstand me—I don't blame Games Workshop! GW would be the first to tell you that they encourage quality painting (look at the winners from the Golden Demon awards). Besides, I'm as big a fan of GW games and figures as anyone. I've painted more than my share of Warhammer and Warhammer 40K figures, but I also enjoy painting BattleTech figures, medieval figures, space craft, and so on—and I prefer them in more traditional colors. Not many survival minded 'mech pilots enjoy fluorescent paint schemes. *("Hey, everyone! Fire at the idiot in the neon pink Battlemaster!")*

There is definitely room for the bright and colorful, but that doesn't mean it's OK to give up quality. If you are a painting contest judge, take a look at the current judging methods. If you're a participant, make sure you let the contest officials

Explanation of Ratings

1 Slag, a good doorstop
2 Poor, for die-hards only
3 Well below average, needs work
4 Below average, but salvageable
5 Standard, average quality
6 Good, definitely worth your perusal
7 Great, have you seen this yet?
8 Excellent, you have to see this!
9 Incredible, where can I get one?
10 No mortal hands produced this!

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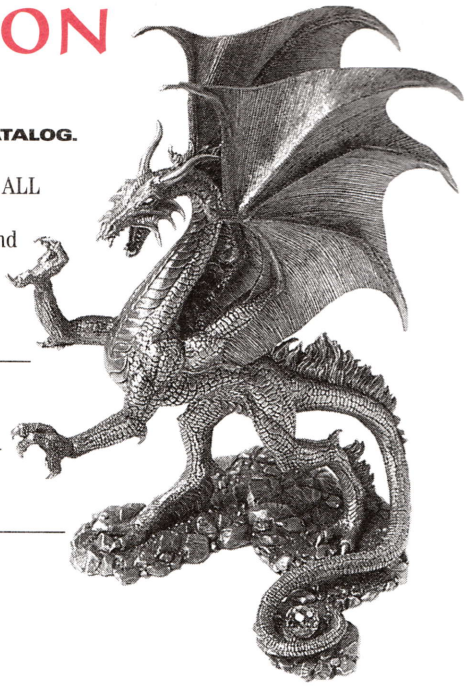

Vampire Hunters (Ral Partha)

Vampires (Ral Partha)

#01-703 Deelah w/Sabertooth
Beastmasters* series
Sculptor: Dennis Mize
Scale: 25mm Cost: $5.00
Technical: 7 Artistic: 8 Value: 6

An imaginative line of figures, the Beastmasters come in matched pairs of person and beast. This particular set includes another of Dennis Mize's perfect females and a playful sabertooth tiger. Anyone have a ball of yarn?

Minor lines run along Deelah's sides and between the tiger's two pairs of legs. The tiger's teeth are connected by a thin sheet—apparently production considerations made it impossible to keep them separated cleanly. Careful knife-work allows you to cut the metal away, separating the teeth.

Deelah comes complete with sword and polearm. While Deelah's clothing runs a little to the sparse side (sparse being defined here as "What clothing?"), her proportions are very good. Facial features and hair are excellent, with other details including bracelets, bracer and arm bands. She doesn't demonstrate a lot of motion, but she is a challenge to paint since there is so much skin.

The sabertooth is incredible and has a lot of life to it. From the twist of the spine to the stance and position of the forelegs, this well proportioned ancestor to the tiger is definitely ready for trouble. This figure, and others like it, demonstrate that Dennis' talents go much farther than humanoids.

#02-505 Pirates/Sailors
Encounters of the Imagination* series
Sculptor: Dave Summers
Scale: 25mm Cost: $6.50
Technical: 7 Artistic: 7 Value: 8

Want to add some spice to your game? Toss in some sea travel! And nothing goes better with sea travel than . . . pirates! (With the possible exception of sea-sickness pills.) With four figures in the blister, you have a good start on a ship's crew.

Slight parting lines are visible in some locations, but they're easy to clear away. There are also some minor sheeting along the right arm of the hook-handed sea dog (Aarrrr!).

The attention to detail and the accessories on this crew is superb. Some have fancy uniform jackets (doubtlessly plundered), others boast less-than-pretty facial features (you won't see these guys in hunk calendars), and their clothing is wrinkled in all the right places.

The only two problems that I noticed are that some of the proportions look wrong (the upper arms on the crewman and one of the captains are too short for the lower arm) and there are three captains for one crew. Actually, I work for a company like that . . . Hopefully Ral Partha will put out a blister of crewmen so we can build a complete pirate crew.

#11-112 Vampire Hunters
#11-119 Vampires
RAVENLOFT® line
Sculptor: Dennis Mize
Scale: 25mm Cost: $5.50 each
Technical: 8 Artistic: 8 Value: 8

Gothic horror, always an American favorite, has been growing in popularity among gamers. To feed that 'hunger,' these blisters show you both sides of the vampire story.

Minor parting lines are about the only visible imperfection in this set. There were small vent threads from the crowns of the heads, which can sometimes lead to problems, but the vents were so small that removal leaves little trace.

The three vampire hunters are a diverse crowd, from a Ghengis Khan look-alike with sword and chainmail, to a crossbow-equipped female with European features, to a Van Helsing look-alike complete with wooden stake, mallet, and cross. Detail is great and their facial features definitely reflect their nation of origin. Painting will be a pleasure.

This trio of vampires also presents a good cross-section of the various versions presented by literature. The tall, ghoul-like creature in a mortician's suit is reminiscent of the stereotypical Nosferatu, while the other two, a slick businessman in cape and the beautiful, sunken-eyed woman in a slinky evening gown, are more in line with the cultured vampire depicted by Frank Langella's Dracula. Both blisters are well crafted and excellent values.

Citadel Miniatures

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Mail Order: Yes Catalog: Free

#8038 Njal Stormcaller
#8403 Varag Ghoulchewer
#8599 Teclis
WH40K*, BLOOD BOWL*, and WFB* lines

Varag Ghoulchewer (Citadel) Njal Stormcaller (Citadel) Teclis (Citadel)

Wizard (Fortress Figures)

Sculptors: Jes Goodwin (Njal & Teclis)/Gary Morley (Varag)
Scale: 28mm Cost: $8.50/$4.50/$8.50
Technical: 7 Artistic: 8 Value: 4

Character models for three of Games Workshop's most successful games, you can't wonder at the popularity of the systems with such great miniature support.

There are few technical problems, just the usual minor parting lines and a vent thread or two. The only assembly required is Njal's pack, which goes on easily and requires no epoxy.

Njal, a special character for the Space Wolves chapter of the Imperial Space Marines, is a powerful Rune Priest, and a formidable figure. Details include wolf head helmet, fur cloak, embellished armor, and an eagle with a bionic eye. (The Six Million Dollar Bird?)

Varag, an orc and therefore obviously superior (is my bias showing?), is excellently muscled and has great detail of accessory and expression. Despite his obvious BLOOD BOWL look, he can also be painted for use with a WARHAMMER* game by a creative player.

Teclis, one of the all-time best WARHAMMER figures, is a marvel of stylized sculpting and never-ending detail. From embellished staff, helm, and sword to his chest plate and sash, Teclis is a wonderful challenge to paint. Take a little extra time to plan out his color scheme before you start—there is so much detail that you'll need it.

Fortress Figures

P.O. Box 66
Jonesboro, IN 46936
Voice: (317) 552-8029 Fax: (317) 552-3540
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: $1.50

#PS1 Wizard
Personality Scale* line
Sculptor: Steve Lortz
Scale: 1/24th Cost: $7.50
Technical: 7 Artistic: 7 Value: 7

Fire Wizard & Water Conjuror (Grenadier) Light Castor & Air Summoner (Grenadier)

If small scale figures aren't your bag, or if you just want a larger display piece for your favorite character, these 1/24th (roughly 54mm) scale figures from Fortress may be what you're looking for.

Minor parting lines and a few rough edges, like the bottom of the feet, are the only technical drawbacks to these resin miniatures.

The wizard has good features, complete with flowing beard and robe, as well as a nicely detailed staff. There is plenty of room for shading, so painting will yield some nice results. His proportions are on the slim side, and his feet are a bit small, but what do you expect from a book worm? The impression is very good.

Grenadier Models, Inc.

P.O. Box 305
Springfield, PA 19064
Voice: (610) 623-5780 Fax: (610) 623-5980
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: $3

#3151 Fire Wizard & Water Conjuror
#3152 Light Castor & Air Summoner
Fantasy Legends* line
Sculptor: Sandra Garrity
Scale: 25mm Cost: $4 each
Technical: 8 Artistic: 8 Value: 8

A gorgeous quartet of mages, these figures are representatives of the magical forces from four elements. Each blister contains a pair of mages, one male and one female.

Slight parting lines are the only noticeable flaw on these characters, and those are insignificant. Otherwise these are technically perfect.

Each of the figures has a natural stance and realistic features. Many embellishments add detail and character to each of the figures, identifying them with their element and making them stand out as individuals.

Flames lick about the hem of the Fire Wizard's robes and the top of his staff, while the Water Conjuror has waves rolling along the bottom of her robes and sea shells hanging from her belt. The Light Castor's robes bear runic symbols, and the Air Summoner's robes and hair are buffeted by strong winds.

Other accessories include a shoulder sack, hair piece, mantle, sash, and belts. The faces are worth mentioning a second time, as they bear such realistic features that you might find yourself looking for these folk on your way to work or school.

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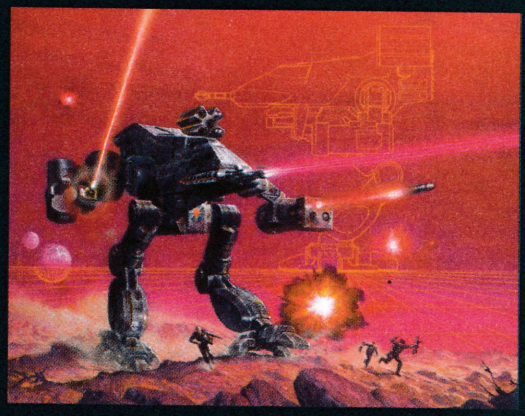

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Secret Agents (Grenadier)

Stormtroopers w/PKM Stormtroopers w/AK Stormtroopers w/RPK (Global Games)

#1534 Secret Agents
Future Warriors* line
Sculptor: Mark Copplestone
Scale: 25mm Cost: $4
Technical: 4 Artistic: 7 Value: 6

Need some secret service types? Maybe some plainclothes enforcers? If so, then this is the pair for you! Dressed in leisure suits and packing firepower, this team can discourage most criminal elements.

Both figures have a slight mold shift problem, noticeable about the shoulders and head. The shift cleans up pretty easily, but it goes through the hair of one agent, requiring some careful work to preserve the detail.

Stylishly suited, complete with dress shirts and flat bottomed ties, these agents are "dressed to kill." The clothing's detail, pockets, lapels, button holes, and wrinkles, is crisp and artistic. Facial features, around slick sunglasses, are great.

Global Games

136 Geary Ave. Unit 215A
Toronto, ONT M6H 4H1
Voice: (416) 516-9118 Fax: (416) 516-4690
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: $1

#3201-2 Stormtroopers w/PKM
#3203-2 Stormtroopers w/AK
#3204-2 Stormtroopers w/RPK
Legions of Steel* line
Sculptor: Dave Summers
Scale: 28mm Cost: $6.95 each
Technical: 8 Artistic: 7 Value: 6

The last of the aliens in the Alien Source Book to have miniatures released for the *Legions of Steel* game, these three blisters provide special weapons figures for the Fantasian military forces. All can be used with the Legions of Steel boardgame, but a couple may be more appropriate for the LOS table-top miniatures rules, due out for the GEN CON® Game Fair.

Technically superior, these figure have minor mold lines if any. No noticeable flaws mar the surface of any of the models. The only imperfection is that some of the assembled pieces don't match perfectly, requiring minimal work to correct.

Though not as sleek and ornate as their Black Empire counterparts, these are nonetheless formidable troopers. The looks are very distinctive among today's miniatures. The overall impression of the figures is not unlike the Russian troopers of WWII, with some high-tech added to preserve the genre. There are two figures in each blister (one of each shown).

Though bodies in each blister are the same, each blister comes with different arms/weapons for each trooper. Lines are sharp, with some exceptional detail on backpack and weapons.

The PKM is a long range rifle with a low rate of fire, while the AK has poorer accuracy but higher rate of fire and comes with a MASLAW, designed for use against light vehicles or heavily armored targets. The RPK is a rapid fire weapon that spreads fire very well up close but loses effectiveness at longer ranges.

Rafm Company, Inc.

20 Parkhill Road E.
Cambridge, Ont. Canada N1R 1P2
Voice: (519) 623-4832 Fax: (519) 623-2795
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: $4

#3622 Lord Chaos on Throne
#3739 Lich Enthroned
Sculptor: Stephen Koo/Robert Murch
Scale: 25mm Cost: $5 each
Technical: 5 Artistic: 7 Value: 7

The lich and chaos lord are two great sets for your favorite NPCs. Alternatively, they could represent player characters with some real psychological problems—either way, they will add some flavor to anyone's game or display case.

The larger pieces have significant mold lines, but they are along the flat edges of throne or dais, not on painting surfaces. The chaos lord's throne has some flash along edges and along the stonework base.

Sculpting is good with a lot of creativity used in position and pose. The chaos lord's throne and base look great, with plenty of stonework and rough detail. The lich's throne, which has a very detailed dias, includes a plastic eye for the top. The figures carry a certain presence, possibly due to the imposing nature of the thrones.

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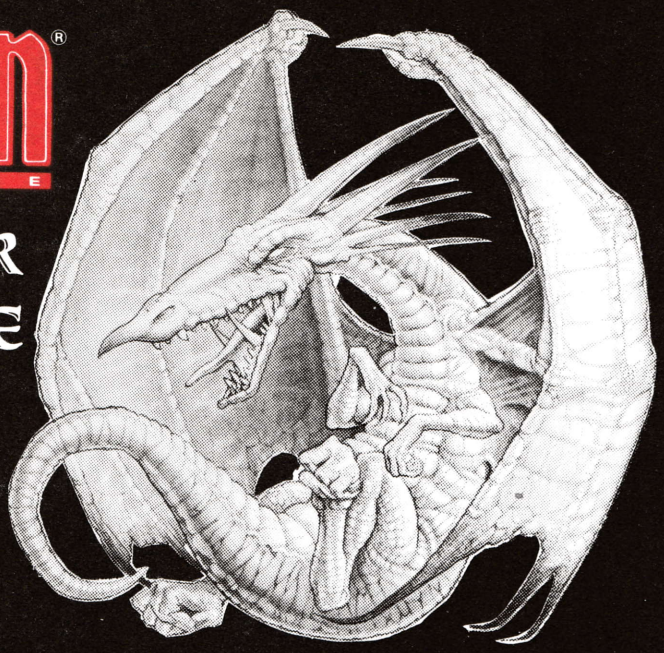

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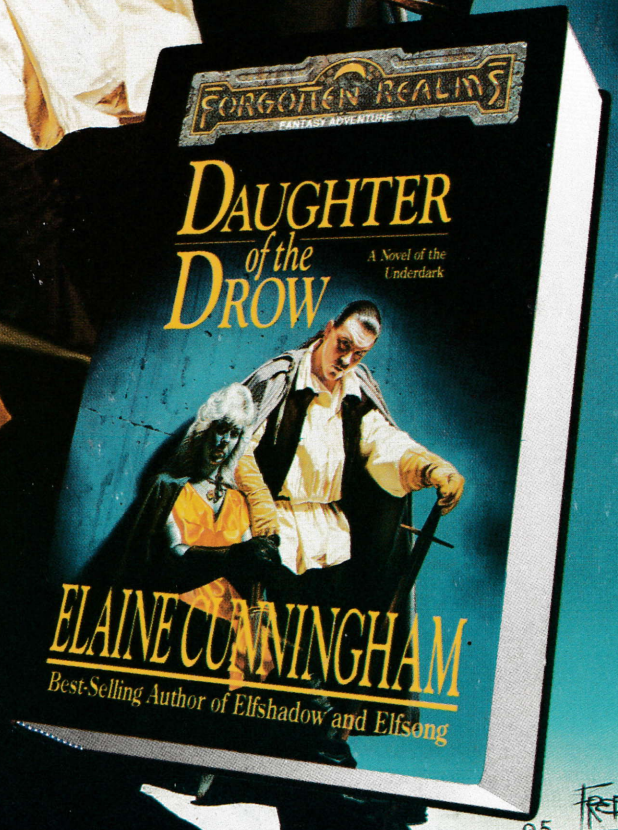

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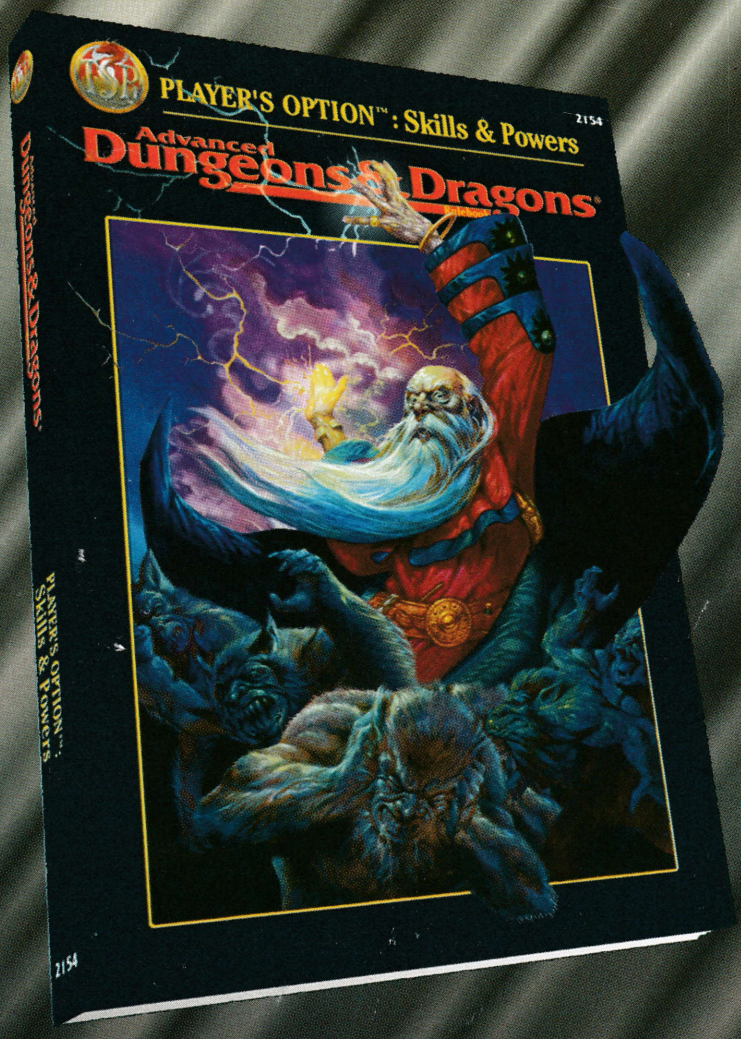

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